Swami Abhedananda

Early Life

Swami Abhedananda was one of those rare souls who gathered around the magnetic personality of Sri Ramakrishna at Dakshineswar and afterwards became instrumental in the fulfilment of his divine mission. The name by which the Swami was known before his taking orders was Kaliprasad Chandra, he was born on **2 October 1866**, in an enlightened family at Ahiritola in Calcutta. His mother Nayantara Devi was intensely devoted to the Goddess Kali, to whom she offered her whole-souled prayer for the birth of a gifted son. It was in response, as it were, to her ardent prayer that the child was born, and she named him 'Kaliprasad' to betoken the grace of the Divine Mother. Kaliprasad's father, Rasiklal Chandra, was a senior teacher of English in the Oriental Seminary of Calcutta. He was no less pious than his devoted wife. No wonder that a child, who in after years shone as a bright luminary in the spiritual firmament of India, should be born of such a worthy couple. His school life began at the age of five, and he excelled all his schoolmates in study, games, paintings, and similar other pursuits. He often listened with rapt attention to the inspiring stories of the great Indian epics from the lips of his dear parents who, knowing the mental make-up of the boy, always tried to kindle in him an aspiration to emulate the lives of the great spiritual heroes of the land.

From his very boyhood he was inclined to Sanskrit studies. At the age of eighteen he creditably passed the Entrance Examination from the Calcutta Oriental Seminary, in which, as already mentioned, his father was a teacher of English. Gifted

with a genius for philosophic contemplation the boy soon began to interest himself in solving the various intricate problems of life. His desire to become a philosopher was greatly stimulated when he read for the first time in Wilson's History of India that Shankaracharya was the propounder of the Advaita system of philosophy. This opened a new chapter in his life. His perusal of the Gita served only to intensify all the more his yearning to follow in the footsteps of the great Acharyas (propounders of systems of thought) and to study their philosophies. But along with this ever-increasing thirst for acquiring spiritual wisdom, he felt as well a strong urge to widen the bounds of his intellectual knowledge by studying the masterpieces of great savants of the East and the West. Even at this tender age he finished reading not only such abstruse books as John Stuart Mill's Logic, Three Essays on Religion, Herschel's Astronomy, Ganot's Physics, Lewis' History of Philosophy, and Hamilton's Philosophy, but also the great works of Kalidasa, Bhavabhuti, Banabhatta, and other eminent poets of our land, a fact which gives ample evidence of his prodigious intellect and extraordinary genius.

His intellectual allegiance was not confined to any particular school of thought. He developed even at this early age a remarkable sympathy for all faiths. That is why we find him so intently listening to the illuminating lectures delivered by the distinguished leaders and exponents of Christianity, Brahmoism, and Hinduism. In 1882-83 he attended a series of public lectures delivered by the noted Hindu philosopher, Shashadhar Tarkachudamani, on the six systems of Hindu philosophy. He was deeply impressed when he heard his pregnant discourse on the Yoga system of Patanjali and learnt about the infinite possibilities of the human soul. Thenceforth he made a special study of some of the most authoritative books on the subject and felt a strong desire to practise Yoga. But he

was told by his friends not to follow any of the methods described in the Yoga Sutras without the proper guidance of a competent preceptor. The boy now began to search for a suitable teacher who would make him a real Yogi and teach him how to attain to the Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the crowning glory of man's spiritual experiences. One of his classmates, with whom he discussed the matter, told him of Sri Ramakrishna and directed him to go to the great saint.

With Sri Ramakrishna

Kaliprasad grew restless to see the Master. But for some reason or other, he could not get a suitable opportunity to go to Dakshineswar for a long time. At last, one day in the middle of 1884, he started at noon for the temple-garden in the grilling heat of the sun. But great was his disappointment when he came to learn after reaching the place that Sri Ramakrishna had gone to Calcutta and would not return till after nightfall. Sorely perplexed, he sat down with a heavy heart under a tree. After a while, a young man, Shashi by name (afterwards Swami Ramakrishnananda), appeared there and asked him in loving accents the reason for his coming to Dakshineswar. Kali opened his heart to him. Shashi, coming to know that Kali had not eaten anything at noon, at once made arrangements for his meal and midday siesta. Kali passed the whole afternoon in a breathless thrill of expectancy. The day rolled on into night, but still the Master did not come! The joy of the boy, however, knew no bounds when at about nine o'clock Sri Ramakrishna came back to Dakshineswar. The boy silently entered the Master's room and made obeisance to him. Without any hesitation, he expressed his desire to learn Yoga from him so that he might attain to the highest state of samadhi. At the very first sight, the Master fathomed the depth of the boy's soul, and was delighted

to notice the vast spiritual possibilities latent in him. He instinctively felt that Kali belonged to the inner circle of his young devotees. Sri Ramakrishna was overjoyed to hear the words of the boy and said, 'You were a great Yogi in your previous birth. This is your last birth. I shall initiate you into the mysteries of Yoga practices.' So saying he endearingly drew him to his side, wrote a mantra on his tongue and placed his right hand on the chest of the boy. The mystic touch of the Master brought about a wonderful revolution in his mind, and he immediately became buried in deep meditation. After that Kali began to practise religious disciplines in right earnest under the loving guidance of the Master, and through his grace was blessed with many spiritual experiences.

He now began to avail himself of every opportunity to run away from the stifling atmosphere of his home and to sit at the feet of the Master in the calm and elevating environs of the temple-garden of Dakshineswar. His thirsty soul drank deep at the perennial fount of heavenly wisdom which issued from the lips of the Master for the spiritual comfort of eager aspirants. As time rolled on, Kali found in him the embodiment of the Absolute Truth inculcated by the highest philosophy as well as of the universal religion which underlies all sectarian religions of the world. From the Master he eventually realised that the three orders of metaphysical thought—dualism, qualified monism, and monism are but stages on the way to the Supreme Truth. They are not contradictory but complementary to one another. Thus the validity of all stages that are harmoniously knitted in a graded series of spiritual experiences culminating in the realisation of the Formless Absolute—the One without a second—was made clear to him by the Super-mystic of Dakshineswar. Kali soon became intimately acquainted with Narendranath, the chief disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, and he

often held learned discussions with him on various abstruse points of philosophy, both Eastern and Western. During the illness of the Master at Shyampukur and Cossipore in 1885-86, Kali, along with others, devoted himself heart and soul to the service of the Master and, after his passing, he renounced the world and became a sannyasin with the monastic name of Swami Abhedananda.

Call to the forest

At the Baranagore monastery where one by one the young disciples of the Master gathered together and banded themselves into a holy fraternity of monks under the leadership of Narendranath, Kali used very often to shut himself up in his own room for intense spiritual practices as also for a systematic study of Vedanta and Western philosophy. This rigorous course of spiritual discipline and his deep devotion to the study of Vedanta received the admiration of all and earned for him the significant epithets of 'Kali Tapasvi' (the ascetic Kali) and 'Kali Vedanti'. During this time he composed beautiful Sanskrit hymns on Sri Ramakrishna and the Holy Mother. The latter was deeply impressed when she heard the excellent hymn composed about her own self, and she blessed him heartily, saying, 'May the Goddess of Learning ever dwell in your throat.' Indeed this blessing of the Holy Mother came to be fulfilled both in letter and in spirit.

But very soon the 'call of the forest'—a tendency to embrace a wandering life according to the orthodox traditions of monastic life—was most irresistibly felt by Swami Abhedananda. And he travelled barefoot from place to place, depending entirely on whatever chance would bring to him. He endured all sorts of privation and hardship and practised austerities of all kinds. He

walked up to the sources of the Ganga and the Yamuna, spent most of the time in contemplation of the Absolute, visited sacred places like Kedarnath and Badrinarayan, Hardwar and Puri, Dwaraka and Rameswaram, and met in the course of his extensive travels some of the greatest saints and scholars of the time in various centres of religious culture. While at Rishikesh he made a special study of Vedanta under a celebrated monk named Swami Dhanraj Giri who was noted for his profundity of scholarship and was well versed in the six systems of Hindu philosophy. Needless to say, this rich and varied experience of his itinerant life made him eminently fit to deliver to humanity at large in after years the lofty and universal message of his Master.

Up to this time the ideal of these young monks had been to strive for their personal liberation and realisation of the Supreme Atman by severe penance and meditation, remaining as much as possible aloof from the world in consonance with the prevailing Hindu idea, sanctified by tradition and sanctioned by the sages and seers from hoary antiquity. But Swami Vivekananda, who was then in America, brought home to the minds of his gurubhais, through his inspiring epistles, the fact that the mission of his life was to create a new Order of monks in India who would dedicate their lives to serve others and scatter broadcast over the entire world the life-giving ideas of the Master. The idea of personal liberation, he pointed out, was unworthy of those who believed themselves to be the favoured disciples of a prophet. Because of his profound faith in the leader, Swami Abhedananda, together with other brother disciples accepted his views knowing that the voice of Swami Vivekananda was the voice of the Master. Thus a new orientation of outlook on monastic life came upon him.

First public lecture

In response to an invitation from Swamiji who was then preaching Vedanta in London, he went there in the latter part of 1896. By way of introducing him to the London public Swamiji announced even before Swami Abhedananda's public appearance that a learned brother disciple of his, who had just arrived from India, would deliver a lecture on Advaita Vedanta at the next meeting to be held in the Christo-Theosophical Society of London. The new Swami was taken by surprise as he had not been previously consulted in the matter! His name was flashed in handbills and newspapers even without his knowledge! He was sorely perplexed and became extremely nervous, inasmuch as he had not before this stood on any public platform to deliver a speech either in English or in any Indian language. It was indeed a fiery ordeal for him. He strongly remonstrated with Swamiji for this step which he thought unwise, but all his arguments were of no avail. Swamiji heartened him with the inspiring words, **'Depend on him who has ever given me strength and courage in all the trials of my life.'** These words comforted him, and relying entirely on the infinite grace of the Master, he appeared at the meeting on the appointed day.

The hall was packed to suffocation, and all eyes were fixed upon the radiant countenance of the heroic soul who stood to discharge his responsibility at that crucial hour. The maiden speech which Swami Abhedananda delivered before the Society was a splendid success. At this, Swamiji's joy knew no bounds. Referring to this happy occasion, Mr Eric Hammond, an English disciple of Swami Vivekananda, writes: *The Master (Swami Vivekananda) was more than content to have effaced himself in order that his brother's opportunity should be*

altogether unhindered. The whole impression had in it a glowing beauty quite indescribable.

It was as though the Master thought, *"Even if I perish on this plane, my message will be sounded through these dear lips and the world will hear it."* ' Hearing this lecture, Captain Sevier, another English disciple of Swamiji made the pertinent observation, 'Swami Abhedananda is a born preacher. Wherever he will go, he will have success.'

Swami Vivekananda was fully confident that even in his absence Swami Abhedananda would be the fittest person to carry on, with success, the work which had been started in London. So he entrusted him with the charge of his classes on Vedanta and Raja Yoga and left for India in December 1896. Swami Abhedananda continued his classes and delivered public lectures in churches and religious and philosophical societies in London and its suburbs for one year. During his stay in London he formed acquaintance with many distinguished savants including Prof. Max Muller and Prof. Paul Deussen. His eloquence, his lucid exposition of Vedanta philosophy and, above all, his depth of spiritual realisation made a profound impression on all who came in touch with him and listened to his illuminating lectures. It reflects much credit on his many-sided genius that even within this short period he succeeded in creating in the minds of the Western people a deep-seated regard for the richness and integrity of Indian thought and culture.

At New York

In 1897 a new chapter was opened in his eventful life. At the request of American friends and with the approval of Swamiji,

Swami Abhedananda crossed the Atlantic and landed in New York on 9 August to take charge of the Vedanta Society which had already been started there. He was almost penniless at this time and had to work hard to push on the work. By dint of perseverance, self-confidence and unflinching devotion to the Master he was soon able to create a field for himself and tide over the swarm of difficulties that surrounded him at the initial stage of his work. But his success soon excited the jealousy of the Christian missionaries, who began to fabricate scandalous lies to bring the Swami into disrepute. Nothing daunted, Swami Abhedananda carried on his work with his usual vigour and sangfroid. He was soon acclaimed as a great exponent of Hindu thought and culture and was invited to speak before various learned societies. His profundity of scholarship, incisive intellectual powers, oratorical talents, and his charming personality made him so popular that in New York itself, in the Mott Memorial Hall he had to deliver ninety lectures to satisfy public demand. Even the greatest savants of America became greatly impressed by his intellectual brilliance. On one occasion in 1898 Prof. William James held a discussion with him in his house on the problem of the Unity of the Ultimate Reality. It lasted for nearly four hours, and Prof. Royce, Prof. Lanman, Prof. Shaler, and Dr. Janes, the Chairman of the Cambridge Philosophical Conferences, took part. Prof. James was finally forced to admit that from the Swami's standpoint it was impossible to deny ultimate unity, but declared that he still could not believe it.

In most of his lectures he called upon his audience to cultivate purity of thought and a spirit of love for all, irrespective of caste, creed, or nationality. 'Whether we believe in God or not,' said the Swami, 'Whether we have faith in prophets or not, if we have self-control, concentration, truthfulness, and disinterested

love for all, then we are on the way to spiritual perfection. On the contrary, if one believes in God or in a creed and does not possess these four, he is no more spiritual than an ordinary man of the world. In fact, his belief is only a verbal one.' The Swami was never tired of making it distinctly clear to his Western audience that the religion or philosophy taught in Vedanta is not merely an intellectual assumption, but is the result of a long and arduous search and inquiry into the ultimate principle of this universe. It is this Supreme Principle—the Unchangeable Substance—which has been expressed by human minds under various names such as God, Creator, Designer, First Cause, the Father, Jehovah, Allah, or Brahman, in different systems of thought. 'If we wish to know this Ultimate Truth,' said the Swami, 'we must go beyond the pale of nature and seek the explanation in the realm of the Absolute. Nature with her manifoldness deludes us and lands us in uncertainties. The scientists, even after a careful scrutiny of natural phenomena, have arrived at certain conclusions which are like conclusions in which nothing is concluded. The latest finding of science is that the ultimate goal of everything is unknown and unknowable. Here Vedanta comes to the rescue and advises its students to study not merely nature, but our Self or Atman which is beyond nature, beyond name and form, beyond multiplicity. All confusion will be removed when the Absolute Truth, as taught in Vedanta, will be realised.' The Swami's learned exposition of Vedanta in the light of modern scientific knowledge carried in it such an irresistible force of appeal that he was able to enlist such adherents as would not be convinced unless shown that Huxley, Tyndall, Spencer, or Kant agreed in substance with a particular view advanced by Vedanta.

He travelled extensively all through the United States, Alaska, and Mexico and delivered addresses on various phases of Vedanta philosophy in almost all the principal cities of America. He made frequent trips to Europe also, delivering lectures to appreciative audiences in different parts of the Continent and making contact with eminent scholars. He proved himself not only an able and efficient teacher, but furthered the success of his work in every way by his remarkable organising ability, sound judgement and well-balanced opinion, and by his power of adaptability to Western methods of work and teaching. Contemplative by nature, he was able to maintain a poise and calm even in the midst of his strenuous activities, that added grace and beauty to his manifold works and acted with telling effect upon all who came in contact with his magnetic personality. His scholarship was the despair of many, and his intellectual brilliance, dignified bearing, as also his nobility of character, commanded loving homage from even the most aristocratic sections of the American people. Under his able leadership, the seeds sown by Swami Vivekananda on the American soil went on ever growing vigorously as days passed, striking their roots deep into the heart of the nation. Except for a short visit to India in 1906, he thus spent almost a quarter of a century in this laudable work of spreading the message of the Master in prominent centres of alien culture.

He was not only a powerful speaker, but also a prolific writer. If his spoken words moulded the lives of hundreds of persons, his printed thoughts influenced a wider circle of people in different countries. His writings contain deep philosophy with a great wealth of information couched in a very popular style. As such, they have been of immense help in broadcasting the philosophical and spiritual ideas of India. As a matter of fact,

they constitute a valuable legacy to the spiritually inclined souls all over the world.

Return to India

Swami Abhedananda, after a long and successful work in America, returned to India in 1921. On his way home he visited Japan, China, the Philippines, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Rangoon and spread the message of the Master in those places also. The Swami was now fifty-seven years old. Even at this advanced age his spirit of adventure was not diminished in the least. After reaching India, he started on a long tour and went as far as Tibet and Kabul. He also visited Peshawar, the Punjab and other important places of Northern India on his return journey and reached the Belur Math in 1923.

To carry on Vedanta work in India according to his own plan and method, he soon established a centre under the name of Ramakrishna Vedanta Society in the heart of Calcutta. Attracted by his personality, many distinguished men of the metropolis soon gathered round him and helped him in spreading the Master's message far and wide. A Bengali monthly under the name of Vishwavani was soon published to facilitate his missionary activities. In fact, his soul knew no rest, and he spent the last drop of his energy for the spiritual benefit of those who came in touch with him. But this unusual strain on his nerves at this age began to tell seriously upon his health. His iron constitution broke down almost beyond cure under the pressure of work. But his weakness and ailments notwithstanding, the Swami did not lack his wonted fire and enthusiasm when he was called upon to preside over the Parliament of Religions held at the Town Hall, Calcutta, on the occasion of the birth centenary of Sri Ramakrishna in 1937. He

rose equal to the occasion and he never forgot to emphasise in the course of his learned address the synthetic message of the Master, 'the mission of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna', said the Swami, 'was to show by his living example how a truly spiritual man, being dead to the world of senses, can live on the plane of God-consciousness ... For the first time it was demonstrated that all religions were like so many paths leading to the same goal, that the realisation of the same Almighty Being is the highest ideal of Christianity, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Hinduism, as well as of all other religions of the world. Sri Ramakrishna's mission was to proclaim the eternal truth that God is one but has many aspects, and that the same one God is worshipped by different nations under various names and forms; that He is personal, impersonal, and beyond both; that He is with name and form and yet nameless and formless.' In conclusion the Swami observed, 'I hope that this Parliament of Religions will sound the death-knell of all communal strife and struggle, and will create a great opportunity for promoting fellowship among various faiths.' This was indeed his last public utterance and bears eloquent testimony to his deep-seated loyalty to the Master as also to the sterling stuff he was made of.

Mahasamadhi

The Swami left the mortal frame on **8 September 1939**, and passed into the realm of eternal bliss to enjoy a well-earned rest. The passing of such an outstanding personality from the arena of Indian life was mourned by a large number of people in India and abroad. He was one of the remarkable spiritual and cultural ambassadors of India to the outside world. His was indeed a life in which we find a happy blending of profound spirituality and a spirit of service—a life dedicated to the

spiritual uplift of humanity. He came to the world in obedience to the Divine Will to fulfil the mission of the Master, and after his task had been finished, he went back to the Source of Light and Life from which he came.

COMPLETE WORKS OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Vol. I

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

by Frant Dvorak of Prague)

COMPLETE WORKS
OF
SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

VOLUME I

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA MATH
19-B, RAJA RAJKRISHNA STREET
CALCUTTA • INDIA
1958

Published by
SWAMI PRAJNANANANDA,
General Secretary
The Ramakrishna Vedanta Math
19-B, Raja Rajkrishna Street, Calcutta-6

This Deluxe Binding is distributed by
The Standard Literature Co. (P) Ltd.
Calcutta * New Delhi * Bombay * Madras

Printed by
PRABHAT CHANDRA ROY
Sri Gouranga Press Private Ltd.,
5, Chintamani Das Lane, Calcutta-9

CONTENTS

Spiritual Unfoldment

	Subject	*Page*
Chapter I:	Self-Control	19
Chapter II:	Concentration and Meditation ...	30
Chapter III:	Godconsciousness	42

Self-Knowledge

Chapter I:	Spirit and Matter	69
Chapter II:	Knowledge of the Self	81
Chapter III:	Prana and the Self	95
Chapter IV:	Search after the Self	109
Chapter V:	Realization of the Self	123
Chapter VI:	Immortality and the Self	141
Appendix	... ...	151

Reincarnation

Chapter I:	Reincarnation	161
Chapter II:	Heredity and Reincarnation ...	177
Chapter III:	Evolution and Reincarnation ...	186
Chapter IV:	Which is Scientific—Resurrection or Reincarnation	197
Chapter V:	Theory of Transmigration	205

Doctrine of Karma

Chapter I:	Law of Causation	223
Chapter II:	Law of Action and Reaction ...	227
Chapter III:	Law of Compensation	230
Chapter IV:	Law of Retribution	234
Chapter V:	Philosophy of Karma	239
Chapter VI:	Secret of Karma	251
Chapter VII:	Duty or Motive in Karma ...	262
Appendix A :	Delusion	271
Appendix B :	Heart and Mind	274

		Subject	*Page*
		PATH OF REALIZATION	
CHAPTER	I:	Search after Truth	283
CHAPTER	II:	Worship of Truth	297
CHAPTER	III:	Faith and Knowledge	307
CHAPTER	IV:	Necessity of Symbols	318
CHAPTER	V:	Efficacy of Prayer	335
CHAPTER	VI:	Ecstasy	349
CHAPTER	VII:	Salvation through Love	359
		DIVINE HERITAGE OF MAN	
CHAPTER	I:	The Existence of God	379
CHAPTER	II:	Attributes of God	391
CHAPTER	III:	Has God any Form ?	399
CHAPTER	IV:	Fatherhood and Motherhood of God ...	408
CHAPTER	V:	The Relation of Soul to God ...	424
CHAPTER	VI:	What is an Incarnation of God ...	434
CHAPTER	VII:	Son of God	442
CHAPTER	VIII:	Divine Principle in Man ...	452
		HUMAN AFFECTION AND DIVINE LOVE	
CHAPTER	I:	Human Affection and Divine Love ...	467
CHAPTER	II:	Renunciation through Love ...	480
CHAPTER	III:	Manifestation of Divine Love ...	490

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

HIS LIFE AND WISDOM

SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Swami Abhedananda was one of the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa and a spiritual brother of Swami Vivekananda. He was born in Calcutta on October 2, 1866. His father's name was Rasik Chandra Chandra, and mother's, Srimati Nayantara Devi. He had his education in the Oriental Seminary, Calcutta. From his boyhood, he had intense religious tendency, and had burning desire to learn Yoga, that leads, he believed, to God-realization. He was above all worldly attachments and ties, and used to search for a real Guru for spiritual training. In time, he came in contact with Sri Ramakrishna Paramhamsa at Dakshineswar. In his autobiographical sketch he writes: "One Sunday morning, I reached the Temple Garden at Dakshineswar, where I met the great Yogi, Ramakrishna Paramhamsa, and asked him whether he could teach me the practical methods of 'Yoga Philosophy'. He replied, 'Yes,' and after reading of my past life, he said, 'You were a great Yogi in your past incarnation. Come my boy, I will teach you how to practise Yoga'. Then he initiated me and gave me instructions in concentration and meditation. He touched my chest and aroused my *Kundalini*, the 'Serpent Power' at the base of my spinal column, and I went into *Samadhi*, the state of superconsciousness. In him I found the embodiment of the Absolute Truth of the highest philosophy as well as of the universal Religion which underlies all sectarian religions of the world, and became his humble disciple. I had the good fortune to be with him and to serve for two years. There, I met his other disciples, among whom Swami Vivekananda was the most brilliant. I was attracted to him and became his close companion. Frequently, I used to discuss with him various abstruse points of Epistemology, Ontology and Metaphysics of India and Europe"—(*Contemporary Indian Philosophy*, first edition, p. 49).

In 1886, after the passing away of his beloved Master, Ramakrishna Paramhamsa, Swami Abhedananda renounced the world and became a *Sannyasin* monk, along with Swami Vivekananda and other spiritual brothers (*gurubhais*). He

travelled bare-footed all over the sacred places of India. He became acquainted with Trailanganatha Swami, Bhaskarananda Swami, Pawhari Baba and many other saints of India. He sailed from Calcutta to London in August, 1896. His first lecture in the West was before the Christo-Theosophical Society in London, on the Advaita Philosophy of *Panchadasi*. He met Prof. Max Müller, and Prof. Paul Deussen of Keil University. In 1897, he crossed the Atlantic and landed at New York and took charge of the Vedanta Society at the request of Swami Vivekananda. In New York, he organised the Vedanta Society, delivering regular lectures on different aspects of Vedanta philosophy and religion. In America, he gradually became acquainted with Profs. William James, Royace, Lanmann, Shaler, Dr. Janes and others. He travelled extensively all through the United States, Canada, Alaska and Mexico. He delivered lectures on Comparative Philosophy and Religion, based on he lives and teachings of the Saviours like Sri Krishna, Buddha, Zoroaster, Laotze, Christ, Mohammed, Sri Ramakrishna and others. In 1906, he once returned to India and delivered lectures on different subjects in different places of India and Ceylon, and again went back to America, and devoted himself once more in preaching the Gospels of his Master, Sri Ramakrishna, along with those of other Saviours. He established several Vedanta centres in America, and trained many Western disciples in the sacred lore of holy India.

In 1921, he sailed from San Fransisco and crossed the Pacific Ocean, breaking his voyage at Honolulu, to attend the *Pan-Pacific Educational Conference,* where he was a delegate from India. He next visited Japan, Shanghai, Hongkong, Canton, Manila and Singapore. From Singapore, he was invited to Kuala-Lumpur in Malay States and delivered series of lectures on Vedanta and Comparative Religion. From there he went to Rangoon and delivered many lectures, and returned to Calcutta in 1921, September, after spending twenty-five years in America.

In 1922, he went to Tibet, and visited many Buddhist shrines and monasteries, including the Hemis in Ladak. There he came across a manuscript, containing the unknown life of Jesus Christ, who came to India. He translated portions of it with the help of a Buddhist Lama, and published the same

in his Bengali book, *Kashmere o Tibbate* in 1922. In 1923, he established the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math in Calcutta. He also established the Ramakrishna Vedanta ashrama at Darjeeling in 1924. He was the author of many books on philosophy, religion and culture, such as *India and Her People* (delivered serially in the Brooklyn Institute, New York, in 1905-1906), *Reincarnation* (1900), *Spiritual Unfoldment* (1902), *Doctrine of Karma* (1903), *How to be a Yogi* (1903), *Divine Heritage of Man* (1903), *Gospel of Ramakrishna* (1905), *Sayings of Ramakrishna* (1910), *Great Saviours of the World* (1912), *Human Affection and Divine Love* (1912), *Stotra-Ratnakara* (Ocean of Hymns) in 1923 to name only a few. He left his mortal coil in 1939, September 8, in Calcutta. He also left many other valuable manuscripts on different subjects, and after his demise, the publication department of the Ramakrishna Vedanta Math, Calcutta, has published them one by one, under the titles of *Path of Realization* (1940), *Life Beyond Death* (1944), *Science of Psychic Phenomena* (1946), *Attitude of Vedanta towards Religion* (1947), *Mystery of Death* (1953), *Philosophy and Religion* (1951).

WISDOM OF SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

Such were the ideas of Swami Abhedananda:

We must realize and manifest in our daily life the ideals which we have grasped through the study of books and from our parents and masters. We should recognize that God is all-pervading and dwells in the smallest of the small and the largest of the large.

As the image or reflection of the sun cannot exist for a second independently of the self-luminous heavenly body, so the individual soul, being the image of God, cannot exist even for a moment without depending upon the divine Principle. The individual ego owes its life, its intelligence, its intellect, mind, and all other mental and physical powers

to the infinite source of all powers, all knowledge, all love and ever-lasting happiness. In fact, the individual soul does not possess anything. All these powers and forces . . . proceed from that one inexhaustible source. Nor is the divine Principle far from us; He is the soul of our soul, the life of our life and the omnipotent essence of our being.

The nature of the Self is all-knowing; its knowledge does not depend upon the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge, but it remains unchanged even when all the objects of knowledge have ceased to exist. The all-knowing Self may be compared to the self-effulgent sun. As the nature of the sun is to illumine itself as well as other objects, so the light of the Self illumines its own nature as also the phenomenal world.

There is only one knower and that knower is a part of the universal Knower, which is God. Your own true Self is by its birthright part and parcel of this infinite Being.

You can never lose your individuality, no matter where you go. When Christ realized his individuality as one with his Father in heaven, he did not lose his individuality, but he became conscious of his greater individuality in the Father as immortal Being. He became conscious of his infinite Individuality. He went to the source of all life. . . . We are marching onward to that goal, and we cannot stop until we have become one with that infinite Being.

No individual soul, whether virtuous or sinful, rich or poor, can ever become truly sinless and happy without coming into . . . (the) state of Godconsciousness. You may cry for help and pray for forgiveness day after day, . . . but rest assured that he who will forgive your sins is your own Self. You may call that divine nature God, Buddha or Christ; it is all the same; no other than the divine Self possesses the power of forgiving the sins of the individual ego.

If we once understand that God is the source of all existence and power and is the one Reality, that outside of God no existence is possible, then we begin to feel the presence of divinity everywhere. In our every action, we realize that the divine power is working through us, and at every moment of our earthly existence we feel ourselves to be like so many instruments through which the divine will manifests itself, and we

do whatever He ordains. All our actions are then turned into acts of worship of the supreme Deity. . . . All fear then vanishes, all sins are redeemed, and the individual soul becomes free from the bondage of ignorance and selfishness.

The Absolute is the basis of the universe . . . it is the background of God which is nothing but the cosmic ego. . . . (These) are convertible terms. The personal God whom we worship is the cosmic ego, who sees through all eyes and hears through all ears. He is conscious of the whole Self. . . . Just as we are conscious of our little world, so God is conscious of the whole universe. As we govern and regulate our individual existence, so the cosmic existence is regulated and directed by the cosmic ego (or) . . . personal God.

The infinite eternal Brahman does, indeed, appear and manifest itself with a spiritual form to satisfy the desire of the devotee. . . . Wherever there is intense longing to see God, wherever there is unflinching devotion and unselfish love with the whole heart and soul, there is the manifestation of the formless One to fulfil the desire of the devotee. . . . Intense longing, unswerving devotion, and whole-hearted love of the soul draw out from the infinite source any particular form which the devotee wishes to see and worship; they have the power, as it were, to condense and solidify the water of the ocean of Reality into the various forms. The spiritual form of the Divinity arises in the ocean of formless Brahman . . . floats there for some time, and after satisfying the desire of the true devotee . . . merges into that ocean again.

SPIRITUAL UNFOLDMENT

mind of the seekers of truth to reach the state of concentrated attention or meditation after reducing its distracted and diverged modification (*manovrittis*) to an unbroken flow of one current of thought (*niravachinna-ekamukhi-chintadhara*) towards a fixed ideal. By gaining the power of meditation, a Yogi enters into the state of Godconsciousness, which is called in the treatise on Yoga, *Samadhi*. In fact, Godconsciousness is not a state at all, although commonly known as the fourth state or *turiya*, because it transcends all other states, first, second and third (*Virat, Hiranyagarbha* and *Isvara chaitanyas*) in its surpassing nature and essence. The states are nothing but the different levels of consciousness, and the fourth or transcending consciousness is the pure consciousness (*shudhha chaitanya*) itself. Having attained this pure consciousness or enlightenment, the soul enters into the abode of eternal peace and serene tranquillity.

Acharya Sankara and other non-dualist Vedantists criticize this state of emancipation or *mukti*, achieved through the process of Yoga, because they say that there is a great deal of difference between the yogic intuition and the vedantic intuition. They argue that mere subjugation or suppression of mad rushes of the passions and desires means the reduction of gross forms of the passions and desires into their causal state. They are rather forced to sleep in the bed of the unconscious, but are likely to wake up under favourable conditions. So, by suppression one cannot get permanent peace, but it offers him only temporary calmness of the mind. In fact, the non-dualist Vedantists want the passions and desires to be eternally sublimated into pure consciousness. Like the Vedantists, Sri Aurodindo also said that the *ripus* (passions and desires) cannot be conquered by *damana*. It is only by purification through the divine consciousness entering into the egoistic nature and changing it that this can be done.

Swami Abhedananda's position in his discourses is also quite clear. He deals with the subject of spiritual unfoldment purely from the yogic standpoint, and so it is neither necessary for him to compare his method of treatment with any other systems of philosophical thoughts, nor to refute the method of Yoga in the light of the Advaita Vedanta. Otherwise, when he deals with the process of controlling of the mind in his *Doctrine*

of *Karma* he says: "Instead of indulging in desires, some say, you should kill them out. But you cannot kill them out. There are certain cults that teach: 'kill out all the desires and make your mind blank'. We cannot do that. We can reduce the number of desires by discrimination and not allowing indulgence. In that way we can purify our heart or mind." This purification of mind is no other than the sublimation or transformation (*rupantarakaran*) of the mind into pure consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna also instruct the spiritual aspirants to change or reverse the course of thought from one side to another (*'more phiriye de'*), and the change implies the notion of purification of the mind.

Sri Ramakrishna has said that all the systems of spiritual practices are true, as they lead us to one and the same goal in the final analysis. The paths of progress may differ, but the destination or goal is the same. The ultimate aim of all the systems of religion and spiritual practices is to be free from the bondage of ignorance and simultaneously to attain *mukti* or salvation. So Swami Abhedananda says that a real aspirant of spiritual knowledge may choose and adopt any one of the systems or practices that suits him, and if he is a sincere seeker after truth, he will surely reach the goal.

Swamiji makes his discourses all through very lucid and clear, so that we may grasp and understand the secrets of the subject easily and make them applicable in our daily life. His style and language are penetrating and transparent, and they show us the inner depth, true significance and real purport of the subject and thus help us in realizing the highest truth.

We shall be glad if the author's earnest desire of enlightening the hearts of the readers is fulfilled.

S. PRAJÑĀNĀNANDA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

SELF-CONTROL

Every religion can be divided into two parts—Essential and non-essential parts of religion—Self-knowledge and self-control—The ancient Seers of Truth—The system of Yoga—A true Yogi—The science of Yoga—What is self-control—Happiness comes in the state of perfect freedom—Right discrimination—The conditions of our mind—The natural tendency of the mind—Mind has a tremendous power—Constant change gives the phenomenal pleasure—Pleasure and pain—Our minds are constantly seeking new objects of pleasure—The stronger the opposing power, the greater the mental struggle—The simple desire and passion—Passion and anger—A Yogi traces the cause of desires—The dormant impressions are the causes of desires—The Western psychologists have supported the views of the Indian Yogis—William Hamilton about the impressions—The psychic activity of the subconscious plane—The mind substance is like a sea—The tremendous impulse controls our nerves—How the dormant impressions rise from the bed of the mind—Every new impression is the seed of a new desire—The stored-up impressions are not lost by the death of the body—The mere gratification is not the means to control over the desires—The method of controlling according to the Yogis—Thirst for enjoyment is real disease in us—A Yogi develops his will-power—Concentration and meditation—Buddha and his self-control.

CHAPTER II

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION

The spiritual life of a man—What is *Yoga*—The Raja Yoga—Mental powers, when properly guided—A concentrated mind is compared with a search-light—Each individual possesses the power of concentration—What is concentration—The physiological conditions are necessary for

perception—The power of attention—A great Yogi and a crane—The power of attention is necessary in every work —All discoveries are the outcome of the concentrated attention—The spontaneous attention—Emerson upon concentration —Patanjali and *Dharana*—Disraeli and meditation—Man's greatest achievement is to understand the mysteries of his own being—The Hindu psychologists and the classification of mental states—The state of *Muddha*—That of *Vikshipta*—That of *Ekagra*—That of *Niruddha*—The superconscious state of mind —The *Atman* is always the Knower of the changes of the mind —The mind stuff in the *Samadhi*—How the mental processes begin—Mind in perfect concentration—Dr. Lewes on attention —Mental healers of the present day—The Christian Scientists —A true Yogi is the master of himself—Concentration leads to meditation—What do we mean by 'meditation'—The practice of controlling the mind of the beginners—The road which leads to the attainment of *Samadhi*.

CHAPTER III

GODCONSCIOUSNESS

Ralph Waldo Emerson and Godconsciousness—All religions are like so many attempts—When does true religion begin —Each individual soul is born to combat nature and her laws —The forces of nature—The powers which overcome nature— Lower mind and the higher one—Moral and spiritual planes —A truly spiritual man—Man alone can reach the state of Godconsciousness—A spiritual teacher is necessary to help the *Sadhaka* in his effort—Truth must be gained by truth—The purification of the heart—When shall we be in the path of spiritual perfection—This world is a great school—The search of the ego for something higher—The desire to know the spirit is spontaneous—The fifth stage of the mind—The psychic powers—Other powers—The parable of the wood-cutter and the sage—Those, who are attached to the powers, do not attain God-intuition—The temptations and the spiritual eye—The *Samadhi*—The state of realization—Plotinus and his friend Flaccus—Porphyrious, Dionysius and Meister Eckhert—Horatio Dresser, Mr. Savage and other savants regarding Godconscious

ness—What say the great seers of Truth—The state of *Jivan-mukti*—Jesus and Godconsciousness—The teachings of Vedanta philosophy—Each one of us is at a certain ladder of evolution —We cannot decide upon the highest until we attain to the highest—Spirituality cannot be confined to any creed or sect—Vedanta is not a system of speculative philosophy—Vedanta and Godconsciousness.

"Self is the lord of Self, who else could be the lord?"

"One's own Self conquered is better than all other people; not even a god could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself and always lives under restraint."—*Dhammapada.*

SELF-CONTROL

Every religion can be divided into two parts, one of which may be called the non-essential and the other the essential. Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, ceremonies, and mythologies of all the organized religious creeds come under the head of the non-essential. It is not meant by this that they are useless; on the contrary, the very fact of their existence proves that they are helpful and necessary at certain stages of progress. What I mean is, that it cannot be said that they are absolutely necessary for making one live a purely spiritual life. A man or a woman may be highly spiritual without performing any of the rituals and ceremonies ordained, either by the scriptures of the world, or by any religious hierarchy. A man or a woman may be truly religious without believing in any creed, doctrine, dogma, or mythology. Those who think that these non-essentials are indispensable for attaining to the ultimate goal of religion, have not yet grasped the fundamental principles that underlie all religions; they mistake the non-essential for the essential; they cannot discriminate the one from the other; they lack the insight of spiritual illumination. Those who understand the essentials of religion and strictly follow them in their every-day life do not disturb themselves about the non-essentials; these simple and sincere souls alone reach the goal of religion by the shortest way possible.

The essentials of religion are principally two: Self-knowledge and Self-control. Self-knowledge means knowledge of the higher Self, the divine nature of man; and self-control is the restraint of the lower self or selfish nature. True knowledge of the divine Self comes when the lower self is subdued. In ancient times, Greek philosophers understood these two as the essentials of religion, therefore over the temple entrance at Delphi the phrase "Know Thyself" was so conspicuously engraven. Heraclitus, the ancient Greek philosopher, interpreted

this motto by saying: "It behooves all men to know themselves and to exercise self-control."

In India, the ancient Seers of Truth understood the essential part of religion so well that they tried their best to keep it separate from the non-essential part of the popular religion of the masses. The result of such attempts was the discovery of the system of Yoga. The system of Yoga deals entirely with the essentials of religion; it does not teach any dogma, creed, ritual, ceremony, or mythology. Its main object is to teach mankind the different methods of attaining the knowledge of the true Self, and the practice of self-control. A true Yogi is one who has perfect control over himself, and who has acquired self-knowledge. The science of Yoga explains what self-control is, how it can be acquired, and what is the nature of self-knowledge. A Yogi therefore reaches the ultimate goal of religion and spiritual perfection without wasting his energy in the practice of non-essentials.

The non-essentials of religion are like a huge heap of husks, under which lies hidden the kernel of the essential truth; wherever there is too much of non-essentials, there prevail religious corruption, superstition, and false theology, the main object of which is to convince the ignorant masses that the heap of non-essential dogmas, doctrines, ceremonies, and rituals must be observed by all who wish to be religious. But the science of Yoga, being free from dogmas, ceremonies, and rituals, suffers neither from corruption, nor from superstition, nor does it need any theology. It is pure and simple. It welcomes to its fold all sincere and earnest souls who are searching for higher truth and spiritual life, and seeks to make them spiritual by giving the essentials of religion as their highest ideal. It teaches them the method by which self-control and knowledge of the supreme self can be acquired.

Self-control means the control of the lower self, or the animal nature of man, by developing the higher powers that are latent in the individual soul. Having ascended the grades of evolution from the lower animals, man lives at first on the animal plane; then as he rises higher and higher, the latent powers of the soul gradually begin to manifest and overcome his animal tendencies.

Self-control is not manifested in the character of any man

who ignorantly obeys the dictates of the senses, and blindly serves the internal masters of passion, anger, greed, self-delusion, pride, and egotism. Those who can control themselves, or check the mad rush of the mind toward sense objects, and who cease to obey those animal impulses which are standing like fierce enemies in the path of spiritual progress, enjoy undisturbed peace as long as they live, thus reaching the highest goal of freedom; but those who are constantly guided by sudden waves of passion, anger, pride, jealousy, and hatred, are always disturbed in their minds; they are restless and unhappy. How can persons who are slaves of their senses expect happiness? Happiness comes in the state of perfect freedom, and not in slavery; that freedom again can be acquired only through the practice of self-control; therefore those who desire to enjoy unbounded happiness and peace of mind on this earth should struggle for freedom by learning to practise self-control.

The attainment of self-control is easy for those who have learned to study their own minds, and who, after discovering their weaknesses, try to reform their own characters. Like the lower animals, the natural tendency of human beings is to seek pleasure and to avoid pain. As long as man lives in the darkness of ignorance, and cannot trace the causes which make him happy or unhappy, and as long as he does not understand whether happiness and pleasure come from external objects or from within, so long he fails to be master of himself. Right discrimination of the conditions which make one happy or unhappy is the surest guide in the path which leads to the attainment of self-control.

Now let us examine the present conditions of our minds. They are naturally attracted by the objects which are pleasing to the senses, or which help in fulfilling the purposes and desires that are extremely strong in us. The majority of mankind are attached to those objects which give pleasure, both sensuous and mental. They are never attached to anything or anybody where they do not find pleasure. In the same manner it can be shown that the natural tendency of the mind is also to get away from pain. The eyes are pleased to look at the beautiful colour which attracts them, the ears are pleased to hear sweet words, melodious notes, and good music. We like to smell sweet fragrance, and to taste the things pleasing to the palate.

Yet that which is pleasing to the senses of one man may give pain to another. A Chinaman enjoys Chinese music, but it is painful to our ears. Similarly, the music which is delightful to our ears, gives no pleasure to a Chinaman. Western music seems like howling and screaming to many Oriental ears which are not trained to it. Many people enjoy curious flavours and high seasoning, and others are disgusted by them. Some people enjoy the burning sensation in the tongue and throat produced by red pepper, while others feel pain from it and shun it. The same colour or same sound or taste which is pleasing to one, may be a source of intense discomfort to another. This shows that pleasure and pain are not the inherent properties of the objects of senses, but that they depend upon the conditions of the mind and body which come in direct contact with those objects.

Mind has tremendous power over the body. If a certain idea gets possession of the mind it affects the body and produces corresponding changes in the whole system. The same mind which found pleasure in a certain thing at one time, dislikes the very sight of that thing if new ideas happen to get a hold upon it. For example, animal flesh gives pleasure to a meat-eater as long as he thinks it is the right kind of food, but when the nobler principles of vegetarian diet dawn upon his mind and convert him into a vegetarion, the very odour of meat will be offensive, and may make him feel ill ; his stomach will refuse to digest animal flesh, and it may even become a cause of pain and suffering to him. Therefore, it can be said that there is nothing in the universe from which all individuals can derive absolute pleasure or absolute pain, or that can even please the same individual at all times. Those who seek pleasure from the objects of senses cannot stick to one particular enjoyment at the time. If they try to enjoy the same thing day after day, they will soon tire of it ; satiety is the inevitable result, and with that comes loss of interest.

Suppose a lady who is passionately fond of the opera should constantly hear the same opera day and night, without hearing or doing anything else, she would surely tire of it in a few days. Constant change of the objects of pleasure is absolutely necessary for those people who seek pleasure from the external world. It is for this reason that many people who are too poor to afford much variety in their pleasure delude themselves by

thinking that wealth would give them all they desire, and envy those who possess large fortunes, foolishly believing that the rich must be always happy. In this way, they often fail to enjoy the pleasures within their reach, thus making their life a burden. They fail to understand that wealth has its own trials, that are often only little more bearable than the ills of poverty. The truth is that true happiness can only belong to him who can control his mind. The practice of self-control would be a great blessing to all these unhappy people ; it would make their lives happier and better worth living.

Before we can control the natural tendency of the mind to seek pleasure in external objects, we must know that the feeling of pleasure depends upon the feeling of pain. If we do not have any feeling of pain whatever, we cannot enjoy a pleasant feeling. Pleasure is pleasure only when it stands in relation to the feeling of pain. Whenever we compare one sensation or feeling with another, we find one more pleasing than the other ; the less pleasing one is ordinarily called painful. The tendency of our mind is to seek objects that are more pleasing than those which we already possess, or happen to enjoy, and the moment we find a thing which we think would produce a more agreeable sensation than the things we now have, we crave to possess it. Having satisfied the craving, if after comparison we discover that the latter is not better than the former, we remain as unsatisfied as before, and may even wish to go back to the former condition. Thus we can understand that although pleasures and pain may arise in different individuals from their contact with the same objects of senses, the natural tendency of mind is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. We are attached to those objects from relation with which we derive pleasure, but the moment these cease to yield us gratification, we become indifferent to the very things we so eagerly desired ; sometimes we grow to hate them and wish to get away from them.

Our minds are constantly seeking new objects of pleasure through the gates of the senses, and attach themselves to every fresh object that promises to give us a pleasant feeling or sensation. While this attachment lasts, the mind becomes a slave to it. If anything happens to come in the way and prevent the mind from enjoying a particular pleasure, the mind tries to overcome the obstacle. The stronger the opposing power,

the greater is the mental struggle to subdue it. If the desire be very strong and we cannot succeed in gratifying it by ordinary means, we often get enraged and adopt more violent measures, thus losing all possibility of a peaceful state of mind.

That simple desire for enjoyment takes the form of a ruling passion, agitates the whole mind, and manifests in the form of anger and unrest. In that agitated state of the mind, we lose the sense of right and wrong, memory grows dull, understanding gets confused, we lose foresight and act like brutes. Passion is the stronger form of desire; the same strong desire, when acting under opposition, takes the form of anger. Desire is the first stage, passion is the second stage, and the third stage is anger.

Passion and anger, again, lead to hatred, jealousy, and many other wicked feelings which are expressed outwardly in the form of vicious acts. He who can control his mind from being disturbed by passion and anger, has obtained self-control. The control of passions and anger comes when the mind does not seek pleasure from external objects, but learns by experience that pleasure which can be derived through the senses, is very transient; it lasts for a few seconds only, and its true source is not in the object itself, but depends mostly upon the mental and physical conditions of the enjoyer.

We have seen that passion and anger are the second and third stages of desire; these desires, according to the Yogis, remain in the subconscious plane of our minds. Here a question arises: What is the cause of these desires? A Yogi, trying to trace the cause of desires, says that they are the outcome of the dormant impressions in our minds, or the awakened state of these impressions. He further says that when we enjoy any external object through our senses, our minds are impressed with certain changes which are produced while we are in direct contact with the thing. When we eat an apple, the impression of its taste is left in the mind. When we hear a musical note, an impression of the note, pleasant or unpleasant, remains in the mind. Similarly, all the impressions which the external objects leave in the mind, will remain there in a seed form or dormant state, by the law of persistence of force. None of them will be lost; whatever things we have enjoyed or suffered in our lives are stored up in that seed form, or in

the form of dormant impressions. These dormant impressions are the causes of our desires.

Some of the Western psychologists have supported this theory of the Yogis. Professor Bencke says in his *Elementary Psychology*: "What has once been produced in the soul continues still to exist, even when it has ceased to be excited. That which was conscious merely becomes unconscious, or lives in the internal substance of the soul." Sir William Hamilton admits the existence of the latent impressions when he says: "The whole we are conscious of, is constructed out of what we are not conscious of." He explains the psychic activity of the subconscious plane by comparing the chain of impressions or thoughts with a row of billiard balls, of which, if struck at one end, only the last one moves, the vibration being merely transmitted through the rest. But a Yogi says that these dormant impressions are the seeds or real cause of desires.

Let us suppose that the mind substance is like a sea, that the surface is the conscious plane, and that the dormant impressions lie deep below surface. Here we should remember that anything that remains in a dormant state, is bound to manifest when the conditions become favourable. Forced by their inward nature, when the dormant impressions begin to manifest, they may be said to rise up slowly from the bottom of the sea of mind in the form of minute bubbles. We may call this bubble the subtle state of desire, or the awakened impression. Then it gradually rises to the surface and appears larger and larger in size. Let us call this bubble state of the awakened impression, desire; then the bubble of desire, after playing on the surface of the mental sea for some time, bursts there and takes the form of a wave, and agitates the whole sea of mind, transforming it into one mass of impulse. The mind becomes restless, peace is disturbed, power of discrimination becomes dull, we do not know whether good or bad results will follow should we yield to the impelling impulse; we are forcibly driven headlong toward the object of desire, whatever it be, mental (like ambition, pride, etc.), or merely sensuous. In fact, our controlling power having been overcome by that wave of desire, we can no longer call it desire. It temporarily takes the form of a ruling passion, or strong impulse. That tremendous impulse controls our nerves, muscles, and the whole

body; struggle to gratify this longing, only to find, when we have attained the thing and gratified the longing, that the satisfaction is but brief. The tempest that wrecked our self-control gradually subsides, and the particular desire that provoked it returns again to its dormant state; then a temporary peace of mind is regained and we remain happy for a time.

In the meanwhile another dormant impression gets ready to appear in the form of a bubble. Slowly it rises up from the subconscious to the conscious plane, and the same process is repeated. This ever-recurring series of desires and their temporary gratification forms the daily life of all such persons as have not learned to control their minds. When this fleeting peace of mind, or socalled happiness, has been secured, the desire subsides into a dormant state for a longer or shorter period. This process is continuously going on in each mind at every moment. Suppose a person is invited to a dinner party, where he partakes of something very delicious which he never tasted before and which he likes immensely. Do you think that the impression of that taste will be lost as soon as the dinner is over? Certainly not; it will remain in the mind and engender a desire for the same thing again; the memory will recall that impression and it will become the cause of a fresh desire. In this manner it can be shown that every new impression is the cause or seed of a new desire.

When a man begins to drink intoxicating liquors he feels a peculiar sensation; it drives away his dullness, exhilarates him, excites his nervous system, and makes him happy for the time being. After the effect of the stimulant is over, the impression of the agreeable feeling it produced is left in his mind; for some time it remains latent, then it rises up in the form of a desire, or bubble, to the surface of his mental sea. Rising to the surface, it bursts and produces a wave, or impulse, which intensifies the desire and leads him to drink again. The fresh exhilaration creates another impression, which stamps itself upon the former, and the process goes on with increasing frequency. With every fresh yielding to desire, the old impression is deepened, until the series of stored-up impressions becomes so strong that it forms a part of his nature and becomes what we call habit. Similar processes have produced all varieties of habits, good and bad, which we find in different people in

different countries. A kindred process produces what we call instinct in the lower animals.

The stored-up impressions of one life are not lost by the death of the body, but will remain latent for some time and will become the causes of future desires in another life. Each one of us is born with the stored-up impressions of his past birth, which will re-appear in the form of various tendencies, desires and habits. This is the explanation of the wide variations we see in members of the same family, for which heredity alone, or even heredity plus environment, fails to account. As the number of impressions increases, desires also increase, as has been said; if we allow the desires to rise up and play in our minds, they will take the forms of passion and anger, disturb mental peace, create new impressions, and be in turn the causes of fresh desires. Thus, there is no hope of controlling the mind by mere gratification of desires. There is no hope of satiating the craving for enjoyment by getting the objects of pleasures; this is simply putting fuel on fire, or oil on flames. The more we enjoy, the more will desires increase. Foolish people, who have never analyzed their minds, indulge their desires and seek pleasure from outside objects. No one has succeeded in attaining self-control by being a slave to desires, nor has any one become free from desires by gratifying them. Therefore, a Yogi says: "As fire is not quenched by butter, so the fire of desire will never be put out by the objects of pleasure. The more butter is poured on a fire, the more it will flare up; similarly, the more the objects of desire are indulged, the more the desires will increase. If a person were to possess all the objects upon this earth, still his greed would not stop, he would seek something more." Do you suppose that a man who works hard to become a millionaire will ever be satisfied with his possessions and cease to acquire more? He will go on seeking to add to them as long as he will live. A poor man desires to be rich, a rich man desires to be a millionaire, and a millionaire wants to be a multi-millionaire, and so on; where is there any rest? Where is there happiness? When will his thirst for possessions or enjoyment cease? Will he ever acquire control over his mind? Perhaps not in this life.

Thirst for enjoyment is the real disease in us; its various

symptoms are passions, ambition, pride, hatred, jealousy, anger, etc. Tremendous mental strength and will-power are required to control the restless mind from taking the forms of waves of passion and anger. The perfect *restlessness* of the mind of an ordinary person who is the slave to his desires and passions has been vividly described by a Yogi; the poet could not find a better illustration than to compare it with a monkey, who is restless by nature; then thinking this was not quite enough, he added drunken monkey, stung by a scorpion. When any one is stung by a scorpion, he jumps about from place to place for nearly two days, so you can imagine the restlessness of that poor monkey; still the poet found something lacking in the simile, so he completed it by saying: "At last the monkey was possessed by a demon." Is there any expression by which we can describe the wretched state of that poor monkey? Such is the ordinary state of our mind. Naturally it is restless, but it becomes more so when it drinks the wine of ambition, still more when it is stung by the scorpion of jealousy; but the climax is reached when the demon of pride enters the mind and takes possession of it. In such a case, how difficult it is to bring the mind under control. To conquer mind is more difficult than to conquer the whole world. He is the greatest hero and the real conqueror of the world who has conquered his own mind. "He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he who taketh a city." A Yogi says: "If one man conquers in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquers himself, he is the greatest of conquerors." Therefore we should pay special attention to the study of the mind; we should learn to analyze its nature and constantly watch over its various modifications, trying to develop and strengthen the will-power.

A Yogi develops his will-power by daily practice; he rouses up the higher powers and continues to fight against his greatest enemies with firmness and determination until he accomplishes his end. Perfect self-control of a Yogi is that state of mind where no desires or passions of any kind disturb the peace and tranquillity of his soul. Such a state can be acquired more easily by removing the bubbles of desires before they take the wave form of passions, that is, by attacking them while they are in their weak state. This can be done either by right discrimination of the nature of desire or by comparing the tran-

sitory pleasure which results from our contact with the objects of senses, with the serene, peaceful mind which is undisturbed by desires or passions. We should also remember that the highest ideal of our life is not pleasure of the senses, nor slavery to desires and passions, but the attainment of mastery over the lower self, and the manifestation of the supreme Self.

There is another way of obtaining self-control, through concentration and meditation. Concentrate your mind upon the supreme Self and do not let it be disturbed by any other thought or desire at that time. Those who have read the *Light of Asia* will remember that when Buddha sat in meditation under the *Bo* tree all the dormant impressions began to rise in his mind. They are described as the attendants of Mara, the personified evil thought. But Buddha said: "It is better to die on the battlefield while fighting with enemy than to be defeated and forced to live like a slave, seeking little bits of sense pleasures and enjoyments." With such a strong determination Buddha became master of himself; whosoever will display similar determination of purpose and strength of character, will surely attain perfect self-control. They alone who have acquired self-control enjoy eternal peace and happiness in this life and attain the goal of all religions, the knowledge of the divine Self.

CONCENTRATION AND MEDITATION

The spiritual life of a man or a woman depends upon the subjugation of the senses, upon control of the passions, and upon the manifestation of the divine powers that are latent in every individual soul. Such a spiritual life can be attained by different methods. Each of these methods is called in Sanskrit 'Yoga'. The method or path of concentration and meditation is known as the royal method, or *Raja-Yoga* in Sanskrit. It is the royal road which leads to the realization of Truth. The word *Raja-Yoga* is a compound word; *Raja* means king, and *Yoga,* method of concentration. The method of concentration is described as the king of all other methods, because nothing can be achieved without concentration. There is no power in the universe higher than the power which comes through concentration. The power acquired by its practice can control all the physical forces of nature. A *Raja-Yogi* says that wherever he concentrates his thoughts, there, for himself and to his own consciousness, he will control phenomena. Raja-Yoga teaches that mind is the sovereign power in the universe. Faith-healers, mental-healers, Christian Scientists of to-day have appreciated only one hundredth part of the mental powers which a Yogi in India claims to possess.

When the mental powers are properly guided and directed toward any external object the true nature of that object is revealed, and the result is the discovery of the physical laws which govern the phenomenal world. The powers of the mind are scattered like the rays of an electric light that illumines the surrounding objects. An electric light which enlightens the objects within a very limited circle can be made to illumine distant objects, if we know the art of gathering its rays into one beam and can throw that one flood of converged rays on anything at a considerable distance, as is done by a search-light lantern. We may compare the concentrated mind of a Yogi to a mental search-light. There is as much difference between the scattered mind of an ordinary individual and the concentrated mind of a Yogi as there is between the light of an ordinary lamp and that of an extremely powerful search-light. A Yogi

can throw the search-light of his mind upon the minutest objects at any distance in the realm of the invisible and unknown, and can learn most easily every particular connected with those objects. When the same concentrated mind of a Yogi is directed towards the internal world, it enlightens the most subtle things connected with his inner nature and unveils those higher laws which govern his spiritual nature.

Each individual possesses the power of concentration in a greater or less degree, and uses it in his or her every-day life, either consciously or unconsciously. Concentration in its simplest form is known to us by the name of attention. If we do not pay attention to the object which we see, hear, or perceive we cannot understand the nature of that thing. When we read a book, if our attention be diverted to some other thing, then our eyes may read the letters automatically without grasping the meaning or sense of the subject. When any one speaks to you, if you are inattentive, the words uttered will enter your ears; the vibrations of air carried by auditory nerves to the brain-centres will produce molecular changes in the cells of those centres; all the physiological conditions necessary for the perception of a sound will be fulfilled, but still for want of attention you will not hear it. When you are attending a lecture, if your attention be fixed on something which is more interesting, you will not be able to understand what is being talked about—in fact, you will not even hear a single word that is said. Similarly, in every instance of perception of sense objects you will notice that if there be no attention behind it, you do not really perceive at all.

The power of attention is not altogether an acquired faculty but is largely a gift of nature. Many are born with this power largely developed, but wherever there is the manifestation of mind, we find more or less of the expression of this power of attention. It is a spontaneous outgrowth of the nature of our mind.

The power of concentrated attention manifests itself in the lower animals as well as in man. It varies only in the degree of intensity but not in kind. All animals first direct their attention to the search for food. A vulture fixes his attention on the object of his prey, looks at it from a great distance, then falls upon it and catches it. When a cat catches a mouse or

a tiger falls upon his prey, he fixes his attention first, controls his senses from distraction, collects the scattered forces of his mind and body, and ultimately succeeds in fulfilling his desires. His attention is so concentrated at that time that he hardly takes any notice of anything other than the object in view. Hunters know this fact so well that they take advantage of it when they go out hunting wild animals. A great Yogi in India once noticed a crane standing motionless on the side of a brook with his attention so deeply concentrated upon a fish as not to notice the hunter who was going to shoot him. The Yogi was so astonished that he exclaimed, "O crane! Thou art my teacher in concentration. I shall follow thy example when I practise concentration". In all beasts of prey the necessity for this concentrated attention is well-illustrated by the way in which they get their food. If their attention be distracted by a sudden noise or other interruption their quarry is likely to escape them. There are many instances of the power of spontaneous attention possessed by lower animals. In such cases mental powers are centred into a focus and directed towards one object. Every sense is alert and under complete control, the whole physical activity is converged towards one point, and for the time being motion of the body is arrested. Experience has taught the animal the necessity of this course of action.

When the diverging rays of the mental energy which moves the whole system in different directions are centred into a focus and when the concentrated energy is forced through one channel, it strengthens the mind. That mental strength sometimes expresses itself as physical or muscular strength. In our everyday life we find the expression of the same power of spontaneous attention. Only the workman who is able to fix his mind upon his work can give it intelligent attention, can rise above being a mere automaton. A motorman cannot drive an electric car if his whole attention be not fixed upon his work. That this is a well-understood fact is evidenced by the rule that to prevent distraction, motormen in street-cars are not allowed to talk with passengers. The rider of either horse or wheel who allows his surroundings to absorb too much of his attention is liable to get a sudden tumble. The successful chess-player, playing perhaps half a dozen games at once, has

to exercise a marvellous force of concentrated attention. In dancing, singing, painting, writing, or in any other avocation no man can do his best unless his mental powers are properly concentrated upon the object of his particular line of work.

Without using the power of attention there could not be any great artist, sculptor, or philosopher; no mathematician, scientist, or chemist; no astronomer, musician, or composer. The more this power is developed the more marvellous are its results. All the discoveries in the realms of nature, inventions of machines and of other things which we see today, all the amazing achievements of modern science, are nothing but the results of that wonderful power of concentrated attention displayed by the inventor and the scientist. If a born genius should suddenly be deprived of this power, he would act like ordinary men, for what we call genius is in reality immense power of concentration, so that all the faculties devote themselves to one object, which produces work so remarkable that we at once regard the man who manifests this wonderful ability as above the dead level of ordinary humanity; while on the other hand if an idiot could develop and manifest this one power of concentrated attention, then he would be reckoned as one of the geniuses of the world. Such is the power of concentration. It is the source of all our knowledge. In short, it is the condition of our life. Without exercising a certain amount of this power we could only live while watched over by others, we could not avoid the constant difficulties and dangers with which our life is beset on all sides. Ninetynine per cent. of the diseases and accidents in our lives are the results of inattention to the laws which govern life and health.

A child in the earliest period of its life expresses this innate power of attention by fixing its gaze upon shining objects or upon the face or eyes of its mother or nurse. That simple undeveloped and spontaneous power of attention in a child gradually develops as the little one grows older and comes in contact with the world.

The spontaneous attention which expresses itself in lower animals, in children and uncultured persons, is directed at first towards the objects that are most necessary for the sustenance of life, such as food, clothes, etc. As we rise above the animal

plane through culture and education the power of attention manifests in a different way. Then we gradually learn to direct our attention towards objects which are not merely attractive to the senses or necessary for bodily sustenance, and can fix our minds on such things as are attractive to our intellect and higher nature. Here begins voluntary attention, or attention well controlled and properly directed by intellect and will. This leads to the intellectual culture of an individual and to the attainment of mental strength and to the creation of new thought-currents.

The same attention, when directed towards the observance of moral laws and right actions which bring good results not only to ourselves but also to our fellow members in the social order, leads to the moral culture of our minds. Again, when our voluntary attention is directed towards our spiritual nature, it makes us virtuous and religious and develops our spiritual character. Ultimately, when it is directed in the form of concentrated meditation towards the Universal Spirit, or God, it brings the highest wisdom. It leads to the freedom of the soul from the bondages of ignorance, delusion, and selfishness, and results in the attainment of Bliss absolute, which knows no limit. This highest state is called the state of Godconsciousness. Therefore, everything that has brought human beings to the present stage of civilization, culture and advancement: every act that produces physical good, and moral, intellectual, and spiritual concepts is but the expression of that well-directed power of concentrated attention. Emerson says: "The one prudence in life is concentration; the one evil is dissipation, Concentration is the secret of strength in politics, in war, in trade—in short, in all management of human affairs."

The spontaneous attention, which is a gift of nature, can be transformed, by voluntary effort, into the power of higher concentration upon the most abstract truths, and lastly upon the Absolute Reality of the universe. That simple power can become enormously strong if we know the secret of controlling it. As a gardener, by severe pruning, forces the sap of the tree into one or two vigorous buds instead of suffering it to spindle into a sheaf of twigs, so a Yogi, by controlling the dissipated mental powers and concentrating the whole energy on one point, stopping for the time being the miscellaneous

activity of the mind, develops a power which brings wonderful results in every line of his work. The control of attention by will-power is called concentration, in Sanskrit *dharana.* Perfect concentration brings supreme control over external and internal phenomena. This kind of higher concentration is described by Patanjali in the third chapter of his "Aphorisms on Raja-Yoga" ; *dharana,* or concentration, is when the mind, being restrained from taking various forms, holds on to some object, either in the body or outside the body, and keeps itself in that state. If, by gradual practice, we can control the modifications of the mind-stuff, such as sensations, passions, desires, etc., and converge the whole mental energy towards one point, then that process is called *dharana,* or concentration. The result of such concentration will vary according to the nature of the object towards which the concentrated mental energy is directed. The principal aids to concentration in the way of obtaining the best results from it are, first, right discrimination of the object of concentration ; secondly, a clear and definite understanding of what one wishes to acquire ; thirdly, self-confidence ; and lastly, firm determination, settled purpose, and perseverance. Disraeli said: "I have brought myself, by long meditation, to the conviction that a human being with a settled purpose must accomplish it, and that nothing can resist a will which will stake even existence upon its fulfilment." According to a Yogi, a firm, resolute, and determined mind with a settled purpose will accomplish the best results of concentration in the shortest time possible.

Man's greatest achievement is to understand the mysteries of his own being—to know himself. A true Yogi, therefore, does not care to concentrate his mind upon a search for pleasure as worldly persons do. He does not even spend his mental energy in trying to avoid things which may appear unpleasant for a short time. He does not divert his mental powers by fixing his attention upon the diseases of other persons, nor does he concentrate them to gain selfish ends by injuring others, as trusts and monopolies of the civilized world do ; nor does he practise black magic. A true Yogi never concentrates his mind upon the phantoms of wealth and vain earthly ambitions. According to a Yogi, this kind of misdirected concentration brings waste of that energy which must be stored up to a

considerable extent before the highest result of concentration in spiritual life can be obtained. All these worldly objects are but obstacles in the path of spiritual progress. Few people in this world can understand why these things obstruct the path of spiritual development. But a true Yogi is one who can discriminate truth from untruth, real from unreal, spirit from matter. A true Yogi does not wish to waste his energy in gaining mere transitory things. He wants to attain the highest ideal of life; so he centres his thoughts upon the Supreme Truth or the absolute reality of the universe, and the result of this concentration is the *Samadhi,* or the highest superconscious, tranquil state of mind where alone is possible divine communion, or realization of unity with God on the spiritual plane.

The Hindu psychologists have classified mental activity into five different states: (1) *Kshipta;* (2) *Mudha;* (3) *Vikshipta,* (4) *Ekagra;* (5) *Niruddha.* The first means "scattered," that is, always active, the kind of mind which is constantly at work and never restful. In this state the whole mind rushes like a mad elephant in whatever direction it chooses. It wanders here and there without any aim or purpose, and cannot be brought under control. Those who are in such a state of mind do not even try to stop this purposeless activity, because they believe it to be their normal state and that all other states are abnormal, morbid or diseased. They are afraid of sinking into indifference or losing their individuality if any one tells them to reduce the tremendous speed with which the machine of their mind is running and advises them to take a little rest. They think rest means either sleep or death.

The second class is *Mudha,* meaning "stupid and confused." Those people who are dull, lazy, inactive and idiotic, belong to this class. In this state intellect, understanding and reason are enveloped, as it were, with the darkness of ignorance. These two are the two extreme states of activity and inactivity of mind. The third state is called *Vikshipta,* that is, sometimes active and sometimes dull. The fourth state, *Ekagra,* means "one-pointed," or, in other words, concentrated. The fifth mental condition, known as *Niruddha,* is that state of well-controlled concentration in which all involuntary activity is subdued and the mind, transcending its ordinary limitations,

reaches the superconscious state of *Samadhi,* the state of God-consciousness. The first three states are to be found in ordinary persons, and none of them is of any help in spiritual life. The last two alone are conducive to spiritual growth.

In the fourth state, that is, when the whole mind is concentrated or "one-pointed," we can realize the true nature of things; all painful modifications of the mind become less and less; all knots of desires for worldly things and sense-pleasures are slackened, and they cease to disturb the peace of mind. This state of mind leads gradually to the attainment of the fifth state, when comes perfect control over the mind. Those, therefore, who aspire to spiritual perfection, should make every effort to reach these last two states

When the fifth, or superconscious state of concentration is attained the true nature of the knower or Spirit (*Atman* in Sanskrit) is manifested. But at other times the knower appears as identified with the modifications of the mind substance. Sometimes the knower is identified with impulses, good or bad, sometimes with emotions, painful or pleasurable sensations, or with the changes of gross body and its diseases. This identification of the spirit (or *Atman*) with the changes of mind and body is the cause of our bondage, misery, and suffering. When the knower of misery and sorrow becomes identified with them, he appears as miserable and sorrowful; but in reality the knower is always distinct and separate from the object known.

For instance, when an iron ball is heated in a furnace, it appears red and hot. An ignorant person looking at it will easily mistake it for fire. The intellect, mind, and body may be compared to the iron ball and intelligence to fire. Intellect, mind, and body being heated or illumined by the fire of intelligence, which is the true nature of Spirit or *Atman,* appear to the ignorant as intelligent. By mistake the changes of mind and body are identified with the pure and changeless source of intelligence. As we can know the true nature of the iron ball by separating it from the fire, so we can learn the true nature of the "iron ball" of mind-stuff, when in the state of *Samadhi* we separate it from the fire of intelligence. We then realize that it, like the iron ball, is but dark and dead in itself, and that only when illumined by the pure intelligence or *Atman,* does it glow into apparent life.

We can illustrate this in another way. When any bright-coloured object is placed near a piece of pure and transparent crystal, the whole crystal is so suffused with the colour thrown upon it that only a close observer can detect that in itself the pure crystal has no colour. Similarly, the true nature of the *Atman* or Spirit is covered over by the reflected light of the constantly changing modifications of the mind-stuff—such as thoughts, feelings, passions, desires etc.—until the pure crystal of *Atman* appears to have these modifications in itself. Only the ability to rightly discriminate the real from the apparent can enable us to discover the truth in either case.

If for a moment any one can make his true Self free from the changeful reflections of the mental activities, that instant he will realize the *Atman* or Spirit, and he will cease to commit further mistakes. No longer he will identify himself with the various changes in his mind and body. Concentration and meditation are the only processes by which this realization can be accomplished.

There are various methods for developing the power of concentration. Those methods should be learned from skilful spiritual teachers who have practised them for a long time and whose lives are pure, chaste, and free from blemishes. One can easily learn some of the methods from Raja-Yoga or any other book on the practice of Yoga, but without the help of a competent teacher no one should begin to practise them. The power of concentration can be acquired by mental processes alone, or by physico-mental processes. The mental process begins with holding the mind to certain points, sensations or feelings. Suppose you try to concentrate your attention on your little finger. At that time you will have to feel your little finger only, you will have to gather up, as it were, all the mental powers that are scattered all over the body and converge them towards your little finger. If any other thought or idea arises in mind, you must not let your attention be distracted by it, nor let it wander in any other direction. After practising for a few days you will notice that you have acquired some power of controlling your attention and of directing it towards one object. When you have fully attained this control over your power of voluntary attention, you will be able to concentrate your whole mind on any object, whether external or in-

ternal, concrete or abstract, material or spiritual.

At the time of perfect concentration you will notice that the rhythm of respiration will change, and that it will gradually become slower and slower, perhaps it will almost cease for the time being. A clever and experienced French thinker, Dr. Lewes, said: "To acquire the power of attention is to learn to make our mental adjustments alternate with the rhythmic movements of respiration."

The motion of the lungs has a very intimate relation to the activity of the mind. If we control the activity of mind we can also control the motion of the lungs; and conversely, if the motion of the lungs is controlled the mind also comes more easily under control. Again, when the motion of the lungs is under perfect control, every organ, nay, every particle in the body, is brought under the control of the Spirit or *Atman.*

Thus, when the supreme control over attention is acquired by voluntary effort, one can fix his attention on any part of the body and experience strange sensations and wonderful phenomena. It is a well-known fact that one can easily feel pain in any part of the body by strongly fixing his attention there. By an analogous process one can get rid of pain in the body. Mental healers of the present day are familiar with such phenomena, although many of them fail to understand the rationale of their cures. One can cure diseases by fixing attention on the diseased part and sending an opposite current of thought. This method has nowadays become a very common practice with the Christian Scientists and mental healers under a variety of names. But one thing should be remembered, and that is that each individual is born with this kind of healing power. No one can give you that power. It is one of the natural powers of the human mind. It is better to heal one's self than to be healed by some other mind. Do not let our mind be controlled by any other mind. People who go to mental healers or Christian Scientists for help and who allow themselves to be influenced by the minds of others, do not realize that by allowing themselves to fall under the hypnotic power of a stronger mind they are walking in a path which leads to mental degeneration. Many cases have been known where minds have been degenerated into slaves of other minds, losing all power of self-control. How pitiable is the mental

condition of those self-deluded ones who go about seeking help from other minds! Because a Yogi thoroughly comprehends this danger, and he never allows himself to be influenced by another mind. By constant practice he unfolds those higher powers which are latest in his own soul. A true Yogi is the master of himself. He knows no other master. His mind, senses, and body obey his commands. A true Yogi understands all the finer forces and the laws which govern them. This right understanding and right knowledge of the true nature of soul, *Atman* or Spirit, are the results of the power, acquired by perfect concentration.

Concentration leads to meditation. Meditation means the continuous or unbroken flow of one current of thought towards a fixed ideal. After gaining control over the mind through the practice of concentration, if we can compel the thought-current to flow in one direction for a certain length of time we have attained to the power of meditation. In this state, the mind is not distracted by external noise or by any disagreeable modification of the *chitta*. The objects of meditation will vary with the individual ideals of the persons who practise it. For spiritual unfoldment, the ideal of the unity of the *Atman* or individual spirit, with the Brahman or universal Spirit, will be one of the best subjects upon which to meditate. Such ideas as "I am spirit beyond body and senses and above mind;" or "I am one with the universal Spirit;" or "I and my Father are one," will be of great help to those who wish to quickly reach the highest goal of all religions. First repeat it orally, then mentally. Concentrate your mind on the true meaning and meditate upon it. Let the same current of thought flow without any break or distraction, then only will it be real meditation. If your mind be distracted by any other thought or idea or by external disturbance, firmly bring your attention back again to the chosen ideal. If any evil thought arises in the mind, overcome it by arousing a good thought. If envy or jealousy arises, the feeling of friendliness should be used to counteract it. The feeling of love should be cultivated to conquer hatred; and forgiveness should be practised to overcome the feeling of revenge. In this way you will conquer all evil and injurious thoughts by their opposites. After regularly practising meditation for half an hour each day,

you will notice, after a month, that your whole nature has been changed, and that your mind has become peaceful. Those who have never tried meditation will find it very difficult at first, because the long-standing habit of permitting irregular activity in the mind will baffle all the attempts of the beginner. Various thoughts and ideas which you have never cherished consciously will spontaneously arise from the subconscious plane and will show what tremendous strength they have. The beginner has to slowly and cautiously subdue these obstructive thoughts. He must not pay any attention to them. He must labour hard to prevent his mind from being distracted from the train of thought he has decided to follow. Various disturbing elements will arise, will play for a short while on the conscious plane, and if not noticed will then disappear. But if, on the contrary, he should pay a little attention to them, they will become stronger, and take the form of impulse, and force his whole mind in some other direction. Therefore, instead of following those unbidden thoughts and ideas, he should hold to the ideal.

No sage, whether a Buddha or a Christ, no saint, whether of the past or of the present, has ever found peace without practising meditation. It is the road which leads to the attainment of perfect tranquillity of mind. We are spending the whole of our valuable lives in making money, in eating, drinking, and doing such things as bring a little comfort to the body or a little pleasure to the mind. But we do not think for a moment what a valuable opportunity we are losing. We seek food for body, but we never seek the food for the soul. So feed your souls with the eternal Truth that manifests itself to the purified soul, with that nectar and bliss which can be obtained only through the practice of meditation. Make meditation a part of the daily routine of your life. Seek the company of some disinterested lover of mankind, follow his instructions as closely as possible. Keeping this ideal before your mind, march onward through the path of meditation fighting the enemies of wavering attention and unruly mind like a brave soldier, like a true hero, and stop not until the goal is reached ; ultimately you will be the conqueror of the universe, and the kingdom of God will be yours. By gaining the power of meditation you will enjoy supreme happiness by entering into the state of *Samadhi,* the state of Godconsciousness.

GODCONSCIOUSNESS

Well has it been said by Ralph Waldo Emerson, the greatest poet-philosopher America has produced, that "a man is the facade of a temple wherein all wisdom and all good abide. What we commonly call man, the eating, drinking, planting, counting man, does not, as we know him, represent himself, but misrepresents himself. Him we do not respect, but the soul whose organ he is, would he let it appear through his actions would make our knees bend." The eating, drinking, planting, counting man is limited and imperfect, and is what we call the 'apparent' man, but the real man is free and all wise, divine, and always happy. The soul in each individual is a centre of that circle whose circumference is nowhere but whose centre is everywhere. That circle is called universal Spirit. It is the source of infinite wisdom, all knowledge, all truth, all science, all philosophy, art, beauty, and love. This unlimited circle of infinite wisdom is the real background of each apparent individual. Not knowing that the eternal river of wisdom is constantly flowing within him, the apparent man seeks here and there, and struggles for a drop of knowledge to satisfy his intellectual thirst like the fool, who standing on the banks of a mighty river, digs a well for water to quench his thirst. We do not know how wise and good we are in reality. It takes a long time to discover that all wisdom and all goodness dwell in each individual soul. We are now seeking wisdom from outside, because we are thinking by mistake that it will come from outside. The great sages, prophets, and wise men of the past were those who knew the secret of unlocking that door which prevents the outrush of that inexhaustible river of wisdom which is constantly flowing behind each individual ego. When the all-wise Self begins to manifest its higher powers, the apparent man is called an inspired seer of Truth. Then he realizes his divine nature, ceases to live like an animal, and attains to the state of Godconsciousness, which is the highest goal of spiritual unfoldment. Then he is truly religious, and reaches the goal of all religions. All religions are like so many attempts of the human mind to rise above the animal plane, to go beyond the

senses and to know the reality, and to reach the state of Godconsciousness.

In India, from the Vedic period down to the present time, this attainment of spiritual perfection or Godconsciousness has been regarded as the highest aspiration, and the loftiest aim of humanity. True religion begins, when the soul of man realizes this Godconsciousness, and not until then. The man who reaches this state does not seek anything from outside of himself. He finds all wisdom within his own soul. Amongst the Hindus, from the most ancient times, the attainment of Godconsciousness has been the theme of rich and poor, of kings and beggars, of saints and sinners. It was for this attainment that many kings and princes renounced their thrones and sacrificed their wealth, name, fame, comforts, luxuries—in short, everything that was dearest to them. All the noble qualities which adorn the character of sages and make a man godly in this life, are but the outcome of the attempts for the attainment of Godconsciousness. Is there anything more ennobling, more sublime, more divine than the matchless purity of heart, serene childlike simplicity, lofty self-abnegation, and disinterested love for all which are displayed in the character of one who is conscious of his divine nature? No. Such characters are the beacon lights that are ever shedding their guiding rays on our toilsome path and beckoning us onward to the haven of realization. They are the great leaders of humanity, they rule over millions. They are manifestations of God on earth. They are worshipped by the vast majority of mankind as the incarnations of God. They expressed in their lives the ultimate goal of all religions. The ordinary or apparent man is self-deluded and blind to Truth, is imperfect and limited in every way, and has no spiritual character, being ruled only by self-interest. All of us know that we are now living more or less selfish lives and acting under limitations, that we are not exactly what we wish to be. During the calm moments of our lives, we sometimes look at ourselves and feel that our souls, like eagles, are free by nature and able to soar into infinite space, but are now enchained by selfishness and confined in the cages of gross human bodies. At such times we realize our bondage and seek freedom. Longing to fly into the infinite space of eternal bliss, we struggle hard to break our chains, to throw down the barriers which confine us, and to

conquer all environments which keep us in bondage.

Each individual soul is born to combat nature and her laws. Our lives consist in the constant effort of the soul to overcome the limitations imposed by them. The forces of nature are trying to drag the soul in one direction, while the inner forces impel the soul to resist and rise superior to them. The soul does not want to follow like a slave. It is struggling to subdue nature and to dominate over her laws. This struggle is the cause of the social as well as of the spiritual progress of humanity. A man who does not know how to fight against nature and how to gain victory over her laws, but who on the other-hand follows her blindly, is an uncivilized man, is a savage, and is on a level with the lower animals. True civilization means the conquest of nature by the human soul. The whole history of humanity teaches this fact. If we study external nature we find that nature tells us: "Obey my laws and commands;" but we say: "No, why should we? We are thy masters, thou must obey." Physical nature tells us to go naked and live in caves or forests like the animals, without any cover overhead, but we say: "No, we will have clothes and proper shelter", and we obtain them. Nature would destroy them, but we protect them by our strength and preserve ourselves from heat and cold and changes of weather by which nature would make existence impossible for us, and in the end we succeed. How do we succeed? By studying nature and her laws, and by utilizing her forces in such a way as to make her obey our commands. We know how tremendously powerful are the forces of nature—electricity, steam, etc., but we handle all these gigantic forces of nature and make them serve us. This victory of man over physical nature is due to those higher powers which are latent in the soul. The powers which overcome naure are nothing but the intelligence and will possessed by man. That which conquers is higher than that which is conquered. Therefore physical nature is weaker than the powers of intelligence and will. Similarly, if we study internal nature, we find there also a constant struggle between the higher and the lower mind, between the higher and the lower intelligence, between the higher and the lower will-power, between the spiritual, real, or divine man and the apparent or animal man. The lower mind, lower intelligence, lower will, or the appa-

rent or animal man is that which obeys the physical and sensuous needs of the body, as a slave obeys a master. The higher mind, higher intelligence, higher will, the spiritual, the real, or the divine in man is that which tries to conquer and subdue the lower nature and dominate over it. Of course, we do not find this fight in the lower animals, nor in those who live like them. When this struggle begins we are no longer purely animal, but we are human or moral. To be human or moral, however, is not to be perfectly spiritual. We make a distinction between the moral and spiritual planes. The moral plane is the intermediate stage. The moral man is partly animal and partly spiritual. In a moral man there is a constant struggle between the animal and the spiritual nature. The moral man strives to overcome the animal in him by fighting against it and by constantly watching his mind to prevent the lower or animal nature from spreading its influence over him. A moral man must, as far as possible, strive to avoid temptation, because he is not yet strong enough to overcome its influence. His effort must be to rise to the higher plane, which is beyond temptation. This struggle will only cease when the animal nature is completely conquered, and the moral man has become truly spiritual or divine. When that stage shall have been reached there will be no room for temptations. As long as a man is struggling with the animal nature, he is ethical; but when he has conquered it completely, he is spiritual. The moral man can be tempted by animal attractions, but the truly spiritual man is far above all temptations, and he is beyond the reach of the lower tendencies and animal propensities that trouble the moral man.

In a truly spiritual man all struggle of this sort has ceased forever. Then the true spirit, or the divine nature in man, reigns in its own glory and appears like the self-effulgent sun above the clouds of selfishness and imperfections. The angels, or the personified higher powers of the true Spirit, nay, the whole world bows down before the victorious conqueror and sovereign of nature. That is the state which was attained by Buddha and Christ. The Prince Gautama or Sakya Muni became the Buddha, and Jesus of Nazareth became the Christ when each attained this state of Godconsciousness. Whosoever reaches that realization becomes perfect and free from

selfishness and all other imperfections. Man alone can reach such a state of Godconsciousness. The lower animals and those who live like them must evolve to the human or moral plane first, before they can even attempt to attain the state of God-consciousness. As the animal nature evolves into the moral or human plane, the power of reaching this state is gradually developed, and the individual ego enters upon the different stages of spiritual unfoldment. When it reaches the ultimate point, it is conscious of its divine nature. That point is the climax of the spiritual development of the apparent ego. It is the state of eternal bliss and perfection.

We cannot think of another state higher than that of God-consciousness, because in this state, the soul communes with Divinity and is united with the infinite source of love, wisdom, and intelligence. The individual soul or the "I" becomes one with the Father in Heaven, or the infinite Spirit. Can you imagine any state higher than the state of the union of the individual soul and the universal Spirit ? Thus we see that there are three principal stages through which the apparent ego passes before Godconsciousness is attained. First, the animal nature, which must be overcome by human or moral nature ; secondly the moral nature, which in its turn must develop into spiritual nature. When a man is on the animal plane, he is extremely selfish bound by desires and is a slave of passions and sense-pleasures which have no restriction of any kind ; he has no purity, no moral standard of life or of truthfulness. His highest ideal is the comfort of his body, and he abhors things spiritual, thinking it a loss of time and energy to even hear about his spiritual nature, or to speak of it at all. But when such a man wakes up from this deep sleep of ignorance and self-delusion, either naturally or through the help of a holy *Guru* or spiritual teacher, he begins to seek the moral life. This is the state of awakening of the soul. It is the stage of a beginner in the path of Godconsciousness. Then he tries to live a moral and virtuous life, and begins to examine his own nature, tries to learn his own faults and weaknesses, and having discovered them strives to correct them. This is the state of purification of the soul, and is the second stage of spiritual unfoldment. It is called in Sanskrit *Sadhaka,* or the neophyte state. A neophyte should struggle hard to conquer his nature,

to subdue his passions, and to overcome, by controlling all his habits, the tremendous force which the animal nature exerts. If he does not know how to do this, he should follow the instructions of one who knows, or of one who has realized the state of Godconsciousness. He must not forget his ideal in his every-day life, and he must try to be always on his guard against temptation. Especially must he remember that one cannot know the highest truth, unless he is truthful himself. Truth cannot be obtained by falsehood. Truth must be gained by truth. If we are not truthful we are not ready to reach that state. So a neophyte should try to be truthful in every word and action, because just so far as he fails in this will he fail to reach eternal Truth.

Four things are absolutely necessary for the purification of the heart and for conquering the animal nature. First, self-control, which includes the control of senses and the control of mind by the practice of concentration; secondly, truthfulness; thirdly, disinterested love for all; fourthly, unsefish works. In one of the Upanishads we read: "He shall not attain to spiritual perfection who has not ceased to follow wicked ways, who has not subdued his senses, who has not controlled his mind by concentration, and who is not truthful and kind to all." These lines contain the whole of ethics and the essence of all the scriptures of the world. The secret of spiritual progress lies in the practice of these four.

Whether we believe in God or not, whether we have faith in any prophet or not, if we have self-control, concentration, truthfulness and disinterested love for all, then we are on the way to spiritual perfection. On the contrary, if one believes in God or in a creed and does not possess these four, he is no more spiritual than an ordinary man of the world. In fact, his belief is only a verbal one. Wherever these qualities are manifested we should remember that there the spiritual unfoldment of the soul-powers has commenced. During the process of spiritual evolution the powers of self-control, concentration, etc., which are latent in each soul, begin to unfold from within and manifest themselves in the works of every-day life.

This world is a great school, as it were, in which the individual egos are students, and the various stages of spiritual

evolution in the soul-life are the different grades. When one course is finished, the ego or apparent man begins upon another. If he wants to study one course or lesson over and over again, there is nothing to prevent him from doing so, He may continue in this one grade for years, nay, for many incarnations, if his desire does not change. But the moment he feels tired of repeatedly studying the same course, no longer finding pleasure in it, he naturally seeks a higher class and takes up new lessons. As long as one course continues to be attractive and absorbing, it satisfies us and we do not feel the necessity of another; but the time is sure to come when the lessons of today will lose their charm and will appear dull, insipid, and monotonous. Then we shall seek something higher, something better and more attractive. This search of the ego for something higher and better than it has yet possessed is the cause of its spiritual evolution.

The majority of mankind are so much captivated by sense-objects that they cannot think of any higher ideal; they have weakened themselves so much that they do not realize the slave-like condition of their minds. Therefore the Gita says: "Few among thousands of such slaves of passions and desires seek freedom, while others take delight in slavery; and few among thousands of such seekers after freedom persevere until the emancipation of the soul and spiritual perfection are attained." No one can force another to become spiritual by making him swallow, as it were, the pill of spirituality.

Spiritual unfoldment is brought about by the evolution of the inner nature of the apparent man. The desire to know the spirit must arise spontaneously in the human mind, and when that desire shall have grown sufficiently strong, it will force man to discriminate spirit from matter, the eternal from the non-eternal, truth from untruth. This discrimination is the third stage of spiritual unfoldment. True discrimination leads to the fourth stage in the path. It is dispassion, or non-attachment to material and non-eternal things. In this stage, wealth, property, and sense-enjoyments will have no charm, no attraction for the discriminating soul. In this state the whole aim of life will be changed. If the entire world be shaken to its very foundations, it will not affect the soul which has reached this stage.

When this state has been acquired, the neophyte reaches the fifth stage, which is that of enlightenment. In the course of his onward progress he passes through many intermediate stages, where he experiences many wonderful powers and encounters many strange and sometimes alluring things. If he allows his mind to be attracted by any of those powers, then his spiritual progress will be stopped there. Psychic powers, such as the power of reading the thoughts of others, of knowing what is going on at a distance, of foretelling the future, of curing diseases, etc.—all the powers which are latent in every human being come to tempt the student and drag him downward. If ordinary sense-pleasures are so powerfully attractive, how much more so will be the new and strange temptations to which the attainment of higher mental powers exposes him ! A seeker for spiritual perfection, however, must carefully conquer those temptations, or his quest will be in vain. He should remember the parable of the woodcutter and the Sage and march onward, without paying attention to anything outside of the ideal he has set before himself, which is the realization of Godconsciousness.

A poor woodcutter lived in a village in India near the outskirts of a dense forest. He earned his living and supported his family by selling fire-wood which he collected in the forest. He spent his days in cutting up branches of trees, which, after drying, he made into a bundle. At the close of the day he carried the bundle to the market-place and sold it for a few cents. His whole family depended upon those few cents for their daily living. In this manner the poor man struggled for several years. One day, as he was coming out of the forest bending under the heavy weight of the big bundle of fire-wood on his back, he met a kind-hearted Sage. The Sage, seeing his miserable condition, spoke to him, saying: "Good man, why do you not go onward into the deep recesses of the forest ?" The poor woodcutter replied: "Why, sir, I get enough wood here ; what would be the use of my going farther into the deep forest ?" Again the Sage urged him to go farther into the woods, and thus advising him went away. After his departure, however, the words of the Sage returned to the mind of the woodcutter and began to produce a deep impression. The next day, when he came to the spot where

he had seen the Sage, he remembered the words of the holy man and decided to make an experiment, so he went into the denser part of the forest. As he pushed through the tangled undergrowth, wondering what the Sage had meant by his advice, he suddenly smelled the sweet odour of sandalwood, and looking about found himself close to a sandal-tree. He was extremely delighted. He mentally thanked the Sage, and, collecting as much sandalwood as he could carry, brought it to the market-place and sold the bundle for a very high price. That evening he had more money than he could have earned in five years if he had followed his regular work. Next day he went again to the forest, but he remembered the Sage's advice and said to himself: "The Sage did not tell me anything about sandalwood; he only told me to move onward." Thus thinking, the woodcutter left the place where he had found the sandal-tree and went deeper into the forest. At last he came upon a copper mine. He collected as much copper as he could carry, and selling it in the market-place he got plenty of money. Next day, still following the Sage's advice, he did not stop at the copper mine but moved onward. He came upon a silver mine, and carried away with him quantities of silver, which made him quite rich. But he did not forget the Sage's advice to move onward. He pushed on and on into the forest, not allowing himself to be diverted by the many remarkable discoveries he made on his way. At last, after passing a gold mine, he came to a mine of diamonds and other precious stones. Feeling sure that this must be what the Sage intended him to reach, he did not seek farther, but took the jewels and ultimately became the wealthiest man in that part of the country. Similar is the case of the man who aspires to spiritual perfection. The advice of all the great Sages to seekers after spiritual wealth is to 'move onward' and not to stop after making a little progress, or after possessing some of the psychic powers. Being deluded by desire for name and fame and by ambition of various kinds, many people mistake psychic powers for spiritual gifts and think that if they can cure diseases by mental means, they have attained to spiritual perfection. The number of these self-deluded to spiritual power-mongers is daily increasing in America under various names. If you seek spiri-

tual perfection and Godconsciousness, beware of the temptations that these psychic powers offer to the unwary. None of these powers is the sign of true spirituality. Therefore the seeker after spiritual perfection should carefully overcome these obstacles in the path of his spiritual advancement.

Those who are attached to these powers will not attain to Godconsciousness while that attachment lasts. They keep man on the psychic plane and delude him in such a way that he often ceases his effort to rise higher. These powers are described by Hindu sages (Yogis) as far greater and more subtle temptations than the grosser ones of a lower plane. We ought to avoid carefully the longing for such powers. Let them come if they will, but do not seek them. They are merely the sign-posts that mark our progress; they are not the highest objects to be attained nor are they of any real value in themselves. It is better to consider them simply as obstacles to be surmounted. They cannot produce any injurious effect on one who does not forget his real goal, but steadfastly pushes on, determined to reach the highest ideal of life, the Godconsciousness, constantly keeping this aim before his mind's eye.

After conquering the temptation of psychic powers, the true seeker after Godconsciousness reaches the fifth stage of spiritual unfoldment. His spiritual eye gradually opens, he begins to see glimpses of the higher truth, he knows that the soul is separate from the body, he understands what the subtle body is, whether the soul reincarnates or not and whether the soul existed before his birth;—all such questions are solved in this state of enlightenment. He finds explanations of everything, both physical and mental, and discovers the true relation of the soul to God.

Having attained this enlightenment, the soul rises to a still higher plane of spiritual unfoldment. It is the sixth stage, that of perfect spiritual illumination. Then the goal has been reached, and even in this life, that soul has found eternal bliss in Godconsciousness. This is called by various names by different philosophers and sages of different countries. In Sanskrit it is called *Samadhi*. The Buddhists call it *Nirvana*, which means the cessation of misery, sorrow, selfishness and all other imperfections, and the attainment of blessed-

ness. It is not a sate of nothingness, as some people believe, but the attainment of perfection. The Christian Mystics of the Middle Ages described it as ecstasy, and modern Christians call it the state of communion with God. The name may vary, but the state itself appears to be the same in every case. This state is the ideal of all religions of the world. Among Christians, Mahomedans, Buddhists, Hindus, and others, the seekers after Truth struggle hard to attain this state of superconscious realization. Jesus became the Christ after attaining it, and Sakya Muni became the Buddha or the Enlightened. Ramakrishna, the great Sage of the nineteenth century in India, reached that stage and is now worshipped by thousands of people as an incarnation of God upon earth. All the great sages and prophets described this as the highest attainment. In this stage, the river of the higher Self, the Real man, flows with tremendous force into the ocean of Divinity and nothing can resist the course of that current. The soul in each individual is constantly trying to manifest its Divinity or true nature; and its attempts are perfectly fulfilled when the sixth stage is reached. In this state of realization all problems of life and death are solved, all the doubts of the mind cease forever, and all questions are answered. In this state one sees the underlying unity of the whole panorama of phenomena, and the individual soul then transcends all phenomena and their laws. When such a man wakes up from the superconscious state and comes down to the plane of ordinary consciousness, his whole nature is transformed, he manifests Divinity in every action of his life and sees the same Divinity in sun, moon, stars, in his own Self and everywhere in the universe. He puts on his eyes new glasses, coloured, as it were, with the tinge of the divine Spirit, and wherever he looks, he sees through them manifestation of divinity, and that everything exists in God. Many philosophers have attained to this state. Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist who lived two centuries after Christ, reached it four times in his life. Some people are afraid of losing their individuality. But we can never lose our individuality. Plotinus, after reaching this state, said to his friend Flaccus that in it we realize the Infinite: "You ask how you can know the Infinite? I answered not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define.

The Infinite cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer, in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite anxieties. Like only apprehends the like. When you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, the divine essence, you realize this union, nay this identity." Porphyrius attained to this superconscious state when he was sixty-six years old. Dionysius, who lived in the fifth century, called it the state of the mystic union, or when the soul is united with God. The great Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart, who lived in the fourteenth century, described the nature of this state of Godconsciousness thus: "There must be perfect stillness in the soul before God can whisper His word into it, before the light of God can shine in the Soul and transform the Soul into God. When passions are stilled and all worldly desires silenced, then the word of God can be heard in the Soul." The idea is that calmness of mind and concentrated attention are needed if we wish to hear the divine word. How can we expect to hear that divine voice within us if our minds are disturbed with sorrows, desires, and anxieties? We will have to make our minds free from these for the time being. In that peaceful state comes revelation, and revelation or inspiration means the disclosure of the higher Spirit within us. When that revelation comes, then we understand the nature of that 'Unknown and Unknowable', as it is called by modern science. Then it becomes known and knowable, not by the finite mind, but by the all-knowing Spirit.

He who has not reached this state of Godconsciousness, will stumble hundreds of times before he can grasp its meaning. He will perhaps say: "How is it possible for the created to be one with the Creator?" Or, perhaps he will say: "Can a man who is a sinner by birth ever reach such a state?" Some will say this is the state of nothingness. Horatio Dresser, Mr. Savage, and some others regard it as a state of unconsciousness. A learned professor once told me that there is no such thing as the superconscious state. These people cannot be convinced by arguments or words, they need to experience this

in their own souls. All great Seers of Truth have said that there is such a state. It is not trance, nor catalepsy, nor is it a state of hypnotic sleep. In that superconscious state the whole nature is transformed. The man who has reached it no longer lives as he did before ; he is illuminated, and his face is radiant with divine glory. His sight changes into spiritual sight. He may have been a dualist before and may have believed that God was outside of the universe, but now he sees God everywhere. Becoming dead to selfishness, he sees the all-pervading divine will as working in the universe, and he thinks no more of his will as separate from the universal will. He has reached spiritual perfection who, having surrendered his own will to the universal divine will, keeps quiet like a leaf that has fallen from a tree. When the wind blows, the dead leaf is moved and carried from place to place. In like manner, when the truly spiritual man has become dead to selfishness and remains tranquil, the wind of the eternal will of God moves his mind and body. The mind and body of such a man become the instrument and playground of the Almighty will. This is the seventh and final stage of spiritual unfoldment. It is called in Sanskrit *Jivanmukti* or salvation in this life. The soul has now become a Christ, or a Buddha. Both these words signify the highest spiritual state of Godconsciousness and not any particular person.

If it be claimed that such a state is impossible to attain, how then can the claim be made that Jesus the Christ was conscious of his divine nature ? He is the foundation upon which the fabric of Christianity has been built, and he showed evidences of superconsciousness or Godconsciousness. Some people may despise this state and call such teaching mysticism. If this be a mystical state, then Jesus was a great mystic, because he was conscious of his divine nature, and his religion is founded upon mysticism. If Jesus attained to that Godconsciousness, then every individual may do so ; he was not an exception, as some people may think. In fact, each one of us is bound to attain to that state. No one will be lost. There are various paths through which that Godconsciousness can be gained. If we make Godconsciousness the highest ideal of life, keep our minds open to truth, and do not blindly follow any teachings but use our common sense and reason, then sincerity and

earnestness guided by proper exercise of reason and earnest search after truth under the directions of a truly spiritual teacher, will assuredly lead us through all these stages to the sate of Godconsciousness and spiritual perfection. If you wish to attain to that state in this life and to live like a master on the spiritual plane, and not as a slave of sense-pleasures, you will have first to control the animal nature by the higher nature. The higher nature is already within you. Realize it. Control your lower mind and passions for the time being, then you will be able to live on the spiritual plane as the master over sense-pleasures. If you cannot live such a life, seek the company of those who are their own masters. Through association their life will reflect upon yours. You may say: "Where shall we find such characters?" If it be difficult for you to find such a character, then take an ideal life and follow that ideal and try to become like it. If you have faith in Jesus the Christ, keep that ideal before your mind. Take his life as a model and try to live up to it. Do not listen to anybody's explanation of your ideal. Throw aside all theology, dogma, superstition and the scheme of salvation formulated by the priests, and try to live as Jesus lived. All explanations will come to you from within. If you cannot do that and still believe in God and in prayer, then worship God and pray to Him for this Godconsciousness. Your prayer will be fulfilled. If you do not believe in God or in prayer, and do not care to follow the life of Jesus, your path will be entirely different from that of the believer. Still, do not despair, there are other ways. You do not have to believe in God, or worship Christ. Seek the Truth and try to realize the unchangeable reality of the universe; to discriminate the changeable from the unchangeable, the spiritual from the material. The power of discrimination exists already in your soul. You need not go begging for right knowledge. Open your mental eye and see what is spirit, what is matter; whether spirit is the result of matter, and whether this life is the result of chance or of law. If you cannot discriminate in this way, strive to know who and what you are and what is your relation to the universe. If you think that this is not easy, then do unselfish works, work for work's sake without thinking of the result. Whenever you work in your every-day life, think that you are paying off your debts, as it

were, and not working to gain anything. Do your duty in the best possible way, and do not worry about the results. If this seems to be difficult, then try to love all living creatures as you love yourself. If you think that you cannot do this easily and successfully, then try to concentrate your mind on your higher nature, or take one sacred word or one holy idea and meditate on that. There are hundreds of ways by which one can attain to Godconsciousness and spiritual perfection. There are as many ways to Truth as there are individuals who seek it. This is the peculiarity of the teachings of the Vedanta philosophy—it does not offer a single method only and then condemn all others. It says that each individual must suit himself or herself according to the powers, tedencies, and capacities of the individual ego. That path which is good for one individual may not be so for another. We have to start from where we are now standing. Each one of us is at a certain stage or rung of the ladder of evolution. Such being the fact, each must take the path suited to his nature and follow it sincerely, and must not let his mind be muddled by the opinions of other people. We must use our own reasoning powers and common sense, which is the best sense we have. Then the light of spiritual illumination will gradually dawn upon the horizon of our souls and we shall be able to see things as they are. On the contrary, if we are guided by the opinions of others, we shall not gain much. There are thousands of preachers, philosophers, ministers and priests in the world; each one of them is trying to impress upon the minds of his hearers that his path is the best and the only right one. Now, who shall decide which is right? We cannot decide upon the highest until we attain to the highest, because our decision always depends upon certain standards, which again are subject to change; that which seems to be the highest to-day may not seem so to-morrow. Only that man who has attained to the highest standard of life can say which is the highest and best in reality. All the greatest sages and wise men of the world, however, although they lived at different times and in different countries, are unanimous in declaring that the state of Godconsciousness is the highest. Whenever they describe it they are unanimous in their description. The statements of Christ, Buddha and Krishna, of Plotinus, Eckhart, Ramakrishna, etc., are without material differences. They all

teach that there is one universal goal for all the seekers after truth, and that that goal is the attainment of Godconsciousness. It is the highest ideal of all religions. It makes no difference whether we belong to this sect or that denomination. Spirituality can never be confined within any sect, creed or denomination, nor can it be limited by any organized religion. It depends entirely upon the evolution of the inner nature of the apparent man. The religion which does not teach it, which does not say that Godconsciousness is for every individual, irrespective of caste, creed, or nationality is not worthy to be called a religion. Such religions are artificial and consequently useless. Vedanta is not a dry system of speculative philosophy, as some think, but its ideal is to make each individual soul reach the state of spiritual perfection ; to bring each soul face to face with eternal Truth. According to Vedanta, each soul will attain to the state of Godconsciousness, sooner or later, by the process of spiritual evolution. "Even if the greatest sinner, who has sinned for a hundred incarnations, can realize his divine nature for even one half second, he shall be free from all sins, he shall be pure, perfect and godly in this life. Whosoever reaches the state of *Samadhi* or Godconsciousness, becomes one with God."

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

TO
THE LOTUS FEET
OF
BHAGAVAN SRI RAMAKRISHNA
MY DIVINE GURU
BY
WHOSE GRACE
THE BLISS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE
IS REALIZED

PREFACE

In this age of scepticism and materialism few people care to know their real Self, which is Divine and immortal. But the knowledge of the true Self has always been the principal theme of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta. Even in its most ancient writings, the *Upanishads,* which form portions of the Vedic scriptures, we find how earnestly Self-knowledge or *Atma-jnana* was sought after and extolled. The great inspired Seers, mentioned in these *Upanishads,* discovered and taught that knowledge of the Self lies at the root of all knowledge, whether of science, philosophy or religion. Every sincere seeker after knowledge, therefore, who desires intellectual, moral or spiritual development, must first learn to discriminate between spirit and matter, soul and body, and then realize the all-knowing divine Self who is the eternal foundation of the universe.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Spirit and Matter

Different views of Spirit and Matter—Spiritualistic or idealistic theory—Bishop Berkeley—Modern Christian Science—Materialistic theory—What is Matter—Physiologists about Matter—Perception of colour—What is colour—What is sound—Definition of Matter by John Stuart Mill—Herbert Spencer—What is space—Ernst Haeckel—Matter is always objective—Materialistic theory is a logical blunder—Goethe's views about Matter—Views about Matter of Spinoza, Herbert Spencer, Kant, Plato, Emerson and Vedanta—What is monism—J. J. Thomson on atom—Spirit or mind is uncreated and indestructible—The universe is like a gigantic magnet—Spirit and Matter are two poles, positive and negative—Self or *Atman* is unchangeable and immortal—Spirit and Matter are but parts of one stupendous whole, God—The Cosmic Ego or God—He forms the background of our individual spirits—Whosoever realizes Him attains eternal Bliss.

CHAPTER II

Knowledge of the Self

The term *Self-Knowledge*—The higher Self is same as the Absolute—Self-annihilation is not the ideal of the Vedanta philosophy—Self-knowledge alone helps us to realize the absolute Truth—Socrates and the Delphian Oracle—Vedanta about the Knowledge of the Self—What does an earnest seeker after Truth—The nature of true Self is infinite—The moment we retalize the divine Self within us, we understand the immensity of the Self—*Isha Upanishad* about the Self—Every particles of the universe is in constant motion—Sir William Crookes on vibration—The Self is above vibrations—Motion cannot produce knowledge—What says Sir William Crookes about thought vibrations—What is time—Self transcends the senses—Life is a

mystery—Science does not help us to solve its problem—Analysis of the relative knowledge—Nature is called *Maya*—Scientists about Nature—What the Vedanta says about it—The act of Nature—Space—We cannot limit the Self by any means—There is only one infinite Existence—Hatred proceeds from imperfect relative knowledge—Self-knowledge removes hatred—What is true love—Vedanta about the term 'love'—Sorrow and fear arise from the sense of duality—Vedanta does not teach us to be selfish—What do we mean by *Atman*—The word *Kavi*—Self is described as the greatest poet—True Self is above good and evil—Good and evil are relative terms—*Atman* transcends the changes of nature, yet it permeates nature—Self can exist by itself—It is all-knowing—Perfect happiness comes only when Self-knowledge is gained—Power of *Avidya*—We are the parts of Divinity.

CHAPTER III

Prana and the Self

Brahmins were not the only teachers of spiritual Truth, but the Kshatriyas also—The examples of Drona and Kripacharya—Kshatriyas were the first teachers of the Brahmins in higher spiritual Truths—The Hindu rulers of early days—The great Hindu monarch Divodasa—The story of Pratardana—Pratardana went to Indra for the highest knowledge—Indra told him: 'Know me only.'—Indra said: 'I am *Prana,* know me as *Prana.*'—Life-force is free from birth and death—*Prana* is immortality—*Prana* is inseparable from intelligence of *Prajna*—Indra said that *Prana* and *Prajna* are one and the same thing—Pratardana took life-force for sense-powers—Mind according to the psychologists of ancient India—Indra's next instruction—*Mukhya Prana* is something independent of the sense-powers—The scientists, anatomists and evolutionists about life-force—Vedanta about *Prana*—Life is the same as our self-consciousness—Ernst Haeckel about life or Self—Indra said about the states of deep sleep and dreamless sleep (*Sushupti*)—The examples of blazing fire sparks—The dying man carries everything with him—An object of perception—The whole universe depends upon *Prana*—Prana is not many, but one—Self-consciousness lies at the root of all knowledge—The real subject of everything—

Sound according to scientists—Vedanta philosophy about sound—Self-consciousness as compared to the centre of the wheel of a chariot—True Self is the prime source of everything.

CHAPTER IV

SEARCH AFTER THE SELF

Prajapati said to the gods and demons about *Atman*—The Sama-Veda, the foundation of the science of music—Who are the Devas and Asuras—Gods and demons went to their respective leaders—Ancient custom of India in regard to the paying of homage to the superiors—Who is the best teacher—Prajapati's instructions—'Reflection seen in the eye is the real Self.' —Virochana understood the body as the Self—Indra was dissatisfied with the instruction—He came back again to Prajapati for true knowledge of the Self—Prajapati's instruction to Indra: 'That which enjoys all dreams (*svapna*) during sleep is the true Self'—Indra found no good in this doctrine—Self as the enjoyer of perfect rest in *Susupti*—The Self has no particular form—How can the formless *Atman* manifest itself through the body —All the powers of the senses proceed from the *Atman*—*Prajna* and *Prana*—The Self is the greatest Being in the universe—He who has acquired Self-knowledge can live in the world performing all kinds of works—He who possesses Knowledge of the Self is the master of the world—Knowledge of the Self cannot be easily acquired.

CHAPTER V

REALIZATION OF THE SELF

A Seeker after Self-knowledge—Mere reading of the scriptures does not give Self-knowledge—Earnest longing and sincerity are necessary—The nature of the mind—How do we hear, see etc.—The mind according to Vedanta—The knowledge of the true Self alone can bring Immortality—Immortality is our birthright—Imperfection is due to the limitations of the *Buddhi*—Knowledge is one, not many—The teaching of the *Kena Upanishad*—Intellect cannot reveal the Self—Secondary Knowledge can only be obtained by intellectual apprehension

—Apperception really proceeds from the Self—Absolute Truth is inexpressible by speech—The worshipper of a personal God is not the worshipper of the absolute Truth—Name and form are phenomenal—Prayers are nothing but words—The absolute Being is beyond the relation of time and space—What do we really mean by Self-knowledge—There is no other knower of the Self—Self is always the subject of consciousness—Analysation of perception—The source of consciousness in us is the Knower—Knowledge is inseparable from our true Self—The Self according to monistic Vedanta—How the intellectual understanding depends—The all-knowing Self may be compared to the self-effulgent sun—Self-effulgence needs no other light than itself—The state of *Samadhi*—Self-knowledge precedes even the conception of God—The Self is higher than the personal God —Difference between the relative plane and the absolute—Ego cannot exist without Self-knowledge—What is the real significance of 'existence'—Self-consciousness is the standard of all relative knowledge and relative existence—Knowledge and existence are one—*Sat-Chit-Ananda*—Death means a change of the body—No divine Incarnation can give us immortality—Real strength comes with the realization of the Self—Psychic power is inferior to spiritual power—Self-knowledge alone can make us escape from the law of *Karma* and rebirth.

CHAPTER VI

Immortality and the Self

The anecdote of Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi—Yajnavalkya wished to break the ties of the world—He first explained the true nature of the object of love to Maitreyi—Wealth is not dear—Selfish love becomes unselfish when it is directed toward the *Atman*—One attached to his lower self loves wealth and comfort—All is known by knowing only the Self—The Self is all and all is the Self—Examples of the sound, drum, conch-shell, and fire—The knowledge which we possess and make use of in our daily life is the expression of the absolute Knowledge—Latent energy of the *Brahman*—Self is the *Alpha* and *Omega* of everything—Individual Self perceives sense-objects so long as it remains on the plane of relativity— Right discrimination—Self-knowledge is the goal of life.

APPENDIX

References to passages from *Isha Upanishad*—From the *Kaushitaki Upanishad* (Ch. III, 1-8)—From the *Chhandogya Upanishad*—From the *Kena Upanishad*—From the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.*

SPIRIT AND MATTER

'Matter or object is related to spirit or subject; and the subject or spirit is equally related to the object of matter. If there were no object, there would be no subject; and if there were no subject, there would be no object. For on either side alone nothing could be achieved'.[1]

CHAPTER I

SPIRIT AND MATTER

Spirit and matter have always been subjects for discussion in science, philosophy and religion. Great thinkers of all countries have done their best to understand the true meanings of these two terms and to establish their mutual relation.[1] The two words have various synonyms, such as, ego and non-ego, subject and object, mind and matter. Scientists and philosophers have advanced many theories, from time to time, to explain their ideas and conceptions about them, and have arrived at different conclusions. Some say that spirit or mind or ego is the cause of matter, while others reverse the relation, and believe that matter is the cause of spirit or mind or ego. These conclusions have given foundation to the various explanations of the universe, which can be classified under three heads; the spiritualistic or idealistic, the materialistic, and the monistic theories. The spiritualistic or idealistic theory claims that spirit or mind is the creator of matter and energy,[2] hence, of all material objects; and it denies the existence of matter as distinct and separate from the mode or condition of spirit or mind. The materialistic theory, on the contrary, maintains that matter produces spirit, mind, ego or subject.

There have been many idealistic or spiritualistic philosophers in different countries at different times. In India, Greece, Germany, and England, have arisen a number a idealists like Bishop Berkeley, who have denied the existence of the external world and also of matter, as an entity separate from mental ideas. Modern Christian Science, which teaches that there is no such thing as matter, but that everything is mind, has been built upon this idealistic doctrine of Bishop Berkeley and other philosophers of the same school. In America it is new, because the nation is new. America has not yet produced any great idealistic philosopher.

The materialistic theory of the universe, on the other hand, is maintained by a large majority of the scientists, physicists, chemists, medical practitioners and the evolutionists of the

present time. They try to deduce everything from matter, and claim that it is the cause of mind, ego or spirit. Although there are thousands and millions of people all over the world, who advocate this theory and call themselves materialists, still very few can define the term 'matter' and give a clear idea of what they understand by it.

What is matter? Has anybody ever seen matter? This question can be asked of the materialists. Do we see matter? No. We see colour. Is colour the same as matter? No. It is a quality. Where does it exist? An uneducated man may think that the colour of a flower, as perceived, exists in the flower. But the physiologists explain that the colour, which is perceived, does not exist as such in the flower, but that it is a sensation caused by a certain order of vibrations, coming in contact with our consciousness, through the medium of the optic nerves. This may seem strange, but it is true. The perception of colour is a compound effect produced by vibrations of ether, which, entering through the eyes, create another set of vibrations in the brain cells; and these vibrations, when translated by the conscious entity, are called sensations. Colour, therefore, is the result of the blending of the objective and subjective elements. It is the product of the combination of that which comes from the outside world and that which is given by the subjective or mental activities. Thus, we can understand that colour does not rest in the flower; but that it depends upon the retinæ, optic nerves, and brain cells as well. So it cannot be the same as matter.

Similarly we may ask: Is sound, which we hear, the same as matter? No. It is the result of a certain kind of vibration plus the conscious activity of the mind. If you go to sleep, the vibration of sound will enter through your ears and be carried through the auditory nerves into the brain cells, but you will not hear it, because the percipient mind is not there to translate the vibration into the sensation of sound. Sound, therefore, is not the same as matter. In the same manner, it can be shown that the other senses do not give us any information about that which we call matter. Then, we ask: What is matter? John Stuart Mill defines matter as the 'permanent possibility of sensation' and mind as the 'permanent possibility of feeling.' Are we better off, after hearing this definition?

On the contrary, it is more confusing. The whole difficulty lies in the word 'possibility'. It means, matter is that which permanently makes sensation possible, and mind or spirit is that which permanently makes feeling possible; or, in other words, matter is that which can be permanently felt or perceived, that which is the object of feeling; and spirit is that which can permanently feel or perceive, that which is the subject of feeling.

That which permanently makes sensation possible can never be revealed by the senses; for, the senses are no more than open doors for our sensations. All that we can predicate of matter is that it causes sensations. When we try to know its nature *per se,* or any particulars concerning it, our senses do not help us. The eyes are only instrumental in perceiving the sensation of colour, the ears of sound, nostrils of odour. Our perception of the external world is limited by these sense powers, and all sensations are either direct or indirect results of our sense activities. Although we know that matter is something which exists in space and time and causes various sensations, still we cannot see or touch it. That which corresponds to the name 'matter', will always remain intangible. We may touch a chair, a piece of wood or gold, but we cannot touch matter itself. This is very curious. Gold or stone is not matter, but it is that which is produced by matter. Matter appears as wood or stone.

It may be interesting to know the history of the term 'matter'. This word is derived from the Latin *materies,* meaning 'stuff', and it was originally used in the sense of the solid wood of a tree or a timber for building. Gradually a generalized concept was formed, which meant anything substantial, out of which some other thing was fashioned. When a wooden statue was made, the form was distinguished from the substance wood or *materies.* Here it was still wood. But, when a statue was made of stone or metal, it was still called *materies.* Thus, the name *materies* signified the substance out of which something was shaped or fashioned. Gradually when the question arose: 'What was the substance out of which this world was made ?' the answer was *materies* or matter. So the word 'matter' does not mean any definite thing. It is used for that unknown substance out of which the known objects of

perception are formed. Here ends the literal and real meaning of the term. Matter can be used in the sense of any unknown substance which lies at the bottom or foundation of some form or object. For instance, in our ordinary conversation, we use this word in such expressions as: 'what is the matter?' 'it does not matter', 'important matter', 'decaying matter', etc.

In science and philosophy, however, matter is that unknown substance out of which all phenomenal forms are fashioned. It is beyond sense perception, yet it underlies all the objects of the universe. It is not the same as space or time, but it fills space, manifests itself in time, and cannot be limited by the category of causality. All these ideas are included in the meaning of the term matter. When we think of that substance of which the universe is the appearance, we imagine that it is vast, immense, marvellous, and possessed of wonderful powers, which are constantly changing. But what is matter? Is it one or many? It is one. We cannot say that it is many. Herbert Spencer says: 'Our conception of matter, reduced to its simplest shape, is that of co-existent positions that offer resistance, as contrasted with our conception of space in which the co-existent positions offer no resistance.'[3] Let us understand the difference between space and matter. Space is extension, offering no resistance, but that which offers resistance and lies in space is matter. He also states: 'Of these two inseparable elements, the resistance is primary and the extension is secondary.' As for example, when we touch something, it resists; then we have an idea of resistance; but when we spread our hand that feeling of resistance extends also in space. Herbert Spencer says again: 'Our experience of force is that out of which the idea of matter is built up..... That which opposes our muscular energy is immediately present to consciousness in the terms of force. Hence, forces, standing in a certain correlation in space, form the whole content of matter.' Furthermore, he adds: 'Matter and motion, as we know them, are differently conditioned manifestations of force. They are the concretes built up from the contents of various mental relations.' In order to feel resistance, there must be present one who feels; and then the force that is felt is the primary cause which gives rise to the conception of matter.

Again, matter has not been created by anybody. No one

has ever seen, nor can anyone imagine the creation of matter out of nothing, or its total annihilation. According to modern science, matter, in its true nature, is a substance uncreatable and indestructible, that is, it was neither created out of nothing, nor can it go back into nothing. There are various other definitions of matter. Some physicists say that matter is 'whatever possesses the property of gravitative attraction.' But still, this does not tell us its true nature. We can only say that there is some substance which responds to attractions. Ernst Haeckel, again, defines matter as 'infinitely extended substance, and spirit as all-embracing energy of thought.'

After studying these various definitions, we learn that matter is that substance of the universe, which makes up the objective world, or that which can be perceived by the senses and cognized by the mind. It is always objective, and spirit or mind is always subjective, always the perceiver or cognizer of matter the knower of the object. Now we can understand the difference: spirit is the perceiver and knower, while matter is that which is perceived, sensed and known. The one is the subject and the other is the object. These two exist in relation to each other. The objective world or matter forms only one-half, while the other half is the subjective world or spirit. Therefore, the materialistic theory, which admits the existence of the object and denies the existence of spirit or mind or the subject, is one-sided and imperfect. It ignores the fact that matter or object can only exist as related to the subject.

The materialistic theory is a logical blunder, because it is based upon a confusion between object and subject. It asserts that matter is objective, but, at the same time, it tries to show that it is also the cause of the subject, which it can never be. 'A' can never become 'not-A'. Materialism begins with the idea that matter is objective, and ends in attempting to prove that this objective something has become the subjective mind, spirit or ego. It first takes for granted that matter is that which is perceived, or the cause of sensations, then it gradually claims to show that it produces that which feels the sensations, and this is self-contradictory and absurd.

As materialism is one-sided and imperfect, so is the spiritualistic or idealistic theory of the world, which denies the existence of matter or object, and says that everything is mind.

The theory of modern Christian Science—that all is mind and that there is no matter—is as erroneous as the materialistic theory. Spirit or mind or ego, which is always the subject, can exist as perceiver or knower so long as there is an object of perception and knowledge. If we admit the existence of one, that of the other is implied. Therefore, Goethe was correct in saying: 'Matter cannot exist and be operative without spirit or spirit without matter'. The universal substance appears as possessing these two attributes of subject and object, of spirit, mind, or ego, and matter or non-ego. They are like two modes of one eternal substance, which is unknown and unknowable existence. It was called *Substantia* by Spinoza. Herbert Spencer calls it the *Unknowable.* It is the same as *Ding-an-sich,* or the transcendental *Thing-in-Itself* of Kant; Plato named it the *Good.* It is the *Over-Soul* of Emerson, while in Vedanta it is called *Brahman,* the absolute substance of the universe, the infinite and eternal source of matter and mind, of object and subject. This substance is not many, but one. All varieties of phenomena have come out of this one source, Brahman, and into it they will be reduced at the time of dissolution. It is the universal energy, the mother or producer of all forces. We know that all forces are related to one another and that they are, as modern science explains, the manifestations of the same eternal energy or the infinite substance. From this one source all mental and physical phenomena and material forces have come into existence, and have evolved into various forms and shapes.

This is monism. The monistic thinkers of the present age, like Ernst Haeckel and others, admit this one eternal substance as the source of mind, matter, and all forces. They also accept the great truth which has always been taught by Vedanta: 'From that infinite substance or Brahman, the absolute Being, have evolved life-force or *prana,* mind, all the mental activities, and the sense powers, which are included in the meaning of the term spirit or subject on the one hand, and, on the other, space or ether, and all gaseous, liquid and solid objects, which are understood by matter!'[4] Matter, in its simplest state, can be reduced to the same infinite substance, Brahman, which forms the background of mind or spirit. Therefore, Vedanta teaches that the eternal substance is both the material and the

efficient cause of the universe. Although it is one, still it appears as many by its inscrutable power known in Vedanta as *maya*.

This world is not made up of dead matter alone. It is not the product of the combination of those minute particles called atoms. Until lately the western physicists, chemists, and other materialists believed that these atoms were indivisible units, floating in the infinite space, attracting and repelling one another, mechanically producing the elements of nature and creating the phenomenal world. But now, through the application of electricity, J. J. Thomson, the great English scientist, has proved that the so-called indivisible atoms can be subdivided into still finer electrons, which are nothing but the force-centers of the ancient Hindu scientist. If atoms are made up of electrons, and electrons are but force-centres, where do they exist ? They exist in that primordial ocean of infinite substance or Brahman, the receptacle of the eternal energy, which is in turn the mother of all forces. Thus, we can understand how matter and force are related to the one substance or Brahman. The objective side of that substance appears as matter, and the subjective side as spirit.

I have already said that it is a scientific truth that matter is indestructible and uncreatable ; so is force. Matter and force can be transformed into various manifestations, but can never be destroyed. Now the question rises: If the one half of the world or objective matter and force be uncreatable and indestructible, then what is the nature of spirit ? Is it creatable and destructible ? If the objective half of the universe be uncreatable and indestructible, how can the other half, the subjective mind or spirit, be creatable and destructible ? That is impossible. Spirit or mind in its simplest form is equally uncreatable and indestructible. If matter or object be eternal, then the spirit or subject must also be eternal to make it possible for the object to be eternal. Who will know that matter and force are eternal, if the spirit or subject be not equally eternal ? This point has been overlooked by most of the eminent thinkers and scientists of different countries. The eternality of matter and force or energy presupposes the eternality of spirit or mind. If the one falls, both will disappear. Therefore, the ultimate analysis of spirit and matter shows that both are

uncreatable, indestructible, and eternal. If the one pole of a magnet be eternal, the other pole must necessarily be eternal. Furthermore, the neutral point where both meet must also be eternal. This universe is like a gigantic magnet, one pole of which is matter, and the other is spirit, while the neutral point is the absolute Substance. For this reason these three—matter, spirit and Brahman are eternal.[5]

In Vedanta, spirit is called the *Atman,* the cognizer, the perceiver, and the subject. It is our true Self. It existed in the eternal past and will continue to exist in the eternal future. Nothing can destroy it. The phenomenal world, which is the object of sense perception, may change from one form into another, but the *Atman* or Self will never change. It is absolutely unchangeable. 'Weapons cannot pierce it, water cannot moisten it, fire cannot burn it, nor can the air dry it'.[6] It is an indissoluble, immutable and immortal substance. It is not destroyed at the time of death. Death is the property of everything within the realm of time and space. All objects that have form are subject to death. Birth is followed by death. That which is born must die.[7] Our body will die, because it had its birth and exists in space and time. But the *Atman* or spirit cannot die, because it was never born and is beyond space and time. If you try to think of the birth of your spirit, you will never be able to find an absolute beginning; therefore, *Atman* is beginningless and endless. Everything which can be perceived by our senses will change and pass away, while the *atman* or spirit will remain for ever.

Here it may be asked whether spirit is one or many? The same question may be asked about matter. Is matter one or many? We have seen that matter, as objective substance is one, although it appears as many on account of its manifestations within space and time. Similarly, says the Vedanta, there is one eternal Spirit or Subject of the universe, of which the individual spirits or egoes are but so many manifestations. He is the cosmic Ego, the sum-total of all individual spirits or God.[8] God is the eternal Subject or Knower of the world. He is the cosmic Ego, the sum—total of all individual spirits or egoes and more. He is the one infinite Being, the eternal ocean, which contains so many eddies or souls. The cosmic Ego or God is the first-born Lord of the universe.[9] He is the

first and highest manifestation of the absolute Substance or Brahman. He is the material and the efficient cause of all phenomena. He is the projector of evolution. He differentiates subject from object, spirit or ego from matter or non-ego. In Him everything exists, through Him all beings live, and into Him they return in the end.[10] He is more powerful than all the individual spirits together. We possess small powers; as our knowledge is limited, so are our powers; but God is the one substance whose power is unlimited. He dwells everywhere. He forms the background of our individual spirit and possesses eternal knowledge. He is the Soul of our souls. We should meditate on Him and worship Him; then we shall understand the relation between spirit and matter.

'He is the one eternal Being in the midst of all non-eternal forms and names. He is the one source of intelligence in the midst of insentient matter. He makes that one substance appear as many and fulfils all desires dwelling within the hearts of all creatures. Whosoever realizes Him in his soul attains to eternal bliss even in this life'.[11]

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

'The infinite and eternal truth, Brahman, pervades the whole universe, the visible and the invisible. If the visible be taken away, (if the perceptible phenomena be destroyed) that which will be left is the Infinite. May we realize the Infinite in this life; may we attain to that truth and enjoy peace for ever.

Peace, peace, peace to all living creatures'.[12]

CHAPTER II

KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF

The knowledge of God is not so commonly spoken of in India as the knowledge of the true Self. Self-knowledge reveals the knowledge of the real nature of the Absolute and of the supreme Deity. Ordinarily, we use the word 'self' in the sense of ego, but the term 'Self-knowledge' does not mean mere knowledge of the ego. The ego in us is the actor, thinker, and perceiver. That which performs all the functions of the body and mind, is generally known as 'I' or ego; but it is only the reflection of the absolute Brahman, which is the source of all intelligence. The ego is the image of that divine spark within us, which gives it vitality and makes it do all works, mental and physical. So, when we speak of Self-knowledge, we do not mean simply the knowledge of the lower animal self or ego, but also of the higher Self.

The higher Self is the same as the Absolute which lies at the foundation of the phenomenal universe. The absolute Substance or Brahman is beyond space and time; consequently, it is formless and unchangeable. When it manifests itself as an individualized, self-conscious entity, it is known as the ego. It also appears as the object of consciousness; then it is called matter. The absolute Being, however, is neither matter nor is it the same as ego. It forms the background of our ego; therefore, it is our true Self. When we have realized it, we have known God as well as the relation which the phenomenal universe bears to Him; and the best method of becoming conscious of this absolute Being is through the realization of our true Self, or *Atman,* as it is called in Sanskrit.

Some people think that self-annihilation is the ideal of the Vedanta philosophy, but it is not so. The true Self, according to Vedanta, can never be destroyed. If self-annihilation were the ideal, then the Self would be subject to change and destruction; it could not be the same as the absolute Being. The Vedanta philosophy, on the contrary, teaches that the true Self is absolutely indestructible and unchangeable.

How is it then possible for anyone to think of its annihilation ? Destruction of Self is just as impossible as the destruction of the Absolute ; therefore self-annihilation cannot be the highest aim and ideal of life.

Self-knowledge alone helps us to realize the absolute Truth and to attain perfection. It is considered to be the highest wisdom. When Socrates asked the Delphian Oracle: 'What is the highest knowledge ?' the answer came: 'Know thy Self.' By the word 'self' here is meant not merely the ego, but the true Self. The same knowledge of the real Self has been glorified in India from the most ancient Vedic period. Vedanta, the rationalistic portion of the Vedas, describes this Self-knowledge as the highest ideal of life. If we wish to know God, we must first know our true Self ; we must ask within ourselves, who and what we are in reality, where we have come from, and what becomes of us after death ? These questions are of vital importance. Ordinary people cannot solve such problems, their minds are too busy with the affairs of the phenomenal world. But an earnest seeker after Truth, who is discontented with the knowledge of material objects, wishes to go below the surface of phenomenal appearances and does not stop until the ultimate goal, the Reality, which underlies all phenomena, is discovered. His aim is to find the correct solution of these problems by knowing the true nature of his ego as well as of the universe. He may start with the objective world, but gradually, as he advances step by step and reaches farther and farther in his search after Truth, he comes back in the end to his own Self. Because the true Self is the centre of the universe. The phenomenal world, which consists of the objects of sense-perception, may be compared to a grand circle, the circumference of which lies in the gross material forms and the innermost centre of which is *Atman,* the true Self.

The nature of this true Self, according to Vedanta, is infinite. It is neither limited by time nor conditioned by space relations. The scriptures describe God as the centre of the universe, but Vedanta says that Self or *Atman* is also the centre of the universe, and that the true Self is one with Divinity. The moment that we realize the divine Self within us, we understand that the realm of the same *Atman* extends to the sun, moon, stars, and even to the most distant planets, the

light from which takes hundreds and thousands of years to reach us. Wherever there is existence, whether on the physical or mental plane, there is also the manifestation of this divine Self. That by which we know the existence of the external world, by which we are conscious of our bodies, sense, and mental powers, is our true Self. It is not far from us, yet it is beyond the reach of mind and intellect. The Self is thus described in the fourth verse of the *Isha Upanishad*: 'It (the Self) is beyond all vibration and motion. It is one, and swifter than mind. The senses never reached it, it trascended them all. Though standing still, it overtakes the mind and sense which are running fast. It is the source of all mental activities, sense-powers and the various forces of nature'.[13]

Modern science tells us that the whole world is the product of matter and material forces. Matter, again, as we have seen in the first chapter, is nothing but a certain state of motion or vibration of some substance, the true nature of which is unknown and unknowable. Every particle of the universe is in constant motion or vibration. That which we call heat or light, sound or taste, odour, touch or any object of sense-perception, is nothing but a state of vibration of the same unknown substance. Sir William Crookes says: 'At thirty-two vibrations per second, it is shown that we have the first beginning of audible sound, and that sound ceases to be audible when it reaches to something less than thirty-three thousand vibrations in a second. The vibrations of heat and light rays are almost inconceivably more rapid. They are expressed in no fewer than fifteen figures, whilst the vibrations within a single second of the recently discovered radium are expressed in more than nine millions of millions of millions.' The whole world consists in the vibration of atoms, or the most minute particles of material substance, but, above and beyond all this vibration, there exists the absolute Reality, the true Self, which is the source of knowledge, intelligence and consciousness. It is through this Self that we know that there is such a thing as vibration.

Here the question rises: Who is it that knows that the world is a mass of vibration? Does vibration know itself? It cannot. 'Motion produces nothing but motion.' This is one of the laws of nature which has been confirmed by modern

scientists. Motion cannot produce knowledge. Knowledge is something which is not the effect of motion or vibration; but it is that which enlightens our minds and makes us see and understand that there is such a thing as motion or vibration. Therefore, the *Upanishad* says: 'That which does not vibrate is our true Self'. Search within and see where is that which does not vibrate, but which is the Knower of all vibrations and actions.

'It goes faster than mind'. We know that mind is the fastest thing in the world; thought travels faster than electricity, or any other current that exists on the physical plane. Sir William Crookes reasons that 'the thought vibrations which issue from the brain may really have their beginning at a point where it becomes no longer possible to estimate the vibrations which are caused by the most subtle forces of physical nature.' Further-more, he adds: 'If we can any way realize the concept of a force which is capable of creating thousands of trillions of vibrations in a second, and if we add to this idea that the velocity of these vibrations is equalled by their rapidity, we see easily enough that thought may put a girdle about the earth in an infinitesimal fraction of time'.

We can exchange messages by wireless telegraphy between here and England or any other part of the world, but thought transference is quicker than wireless telegraphy. The mind of a person who is sitting here can go straight into the sun, or beyond the sun into the infinite space where the ordinary force of electricity will not reach perhaps—even there the mind can run in the shortest interval of time. Time exists in mind. What is time? Time means succession in thought.[14] When one thought rises after another, the interval between them is what we call time, so it is subject to mental activity. That which is swifter than mind is the true Self. Our real Self can go quicker than thought-current and even where mind cannot reach. It travels everywhere. Self or *Atman* forms the background of the mind, therefore the Self is quicker and faster than the activity of the mind. Mind can go nowhere without depending upon the Self, the Knower. It remains absolutely inactive when it is separated from the Self.

'The senses never reached it, it transcended them all'. The senses cannot reveal it; sense-powers cannot express the true

nature of the Self, because they are limited by time and space, while the knower of time and space must necessarily be beyond the reach of the senses. When we see the sun, the very sight depends upon self-consciousness; that is, we must be conscious of the fact that we are seeing something, and that consciousness must depend upon our true Self. The sun will not be seen, if our mind and eyes are separated and cut off from Self, the source of knowledge, intelligence and consciousness. Depending upon that source of consciousness and intelligence, our mind works, our senses perform their functions, and the body moves. Therefore, the *Isha Upanishad* continues: 'It (Self) moves and it moves not; it is far and likewise near. It is inside and also outside of all this'.[15] When the body moves, the source of intelligence, or our true Self, appears as moving, but in reality it does not move. Where will it go? It cannot go anywhere. When we move a jar from one place to another, the space within the jar appears to be moving; but does the space move in reality? No. What is it then that moves? We do not know; the form appears to be moving, but the form again is limitation in space. It may be said: 'If space does not move, then the form cannot move'. It seems to be like a puzzle; when we try to answer it, at every step, we meet with insoluble problems.

The whole of life is a mystery. We endeavour to find some explanation by studying nature, but nature puts us into more confusion. Science does not help us; she takes us up to a certain point and there she leaves us without showing anything beyond, without telling us what to do and where to go. Such is the condition of our relative knowledge. When properly analysed, it appears to be a partial expression of the absolute knowledge, which is the real nature of the true Self. Relative knowledge, however, will not help us in solving the riddles of the universe. If we wish to know the ultimate Truth of the world, we must go beyond nature and seek the explanation in the realm of the Absolute. Nature is called in Sanskrit *maya*. She deludes us, yet we are living in nature, and our body, senses, and mind are parts of nature. The more we study nature, the more we are deluded; we do not come to any final solution. Scientists have arrived at certain conclusions, which are like conclusions, in which nothing is con-

cluded. Science tells us that ultimate goal of everything is unknown and unknowable. Here Vedanta comes and advises its students to study not merely nature, but our Self or *Atman;* then, all confusion will be removed and the absolute Truth will be reached.

Nature makes us see that the Self moves—when the body is in motion, but in reality the Self is immovable. Nature makes us feel that Self is very far from us, but it is the nearest thing that we have, nearer than this body and mind, which we consider to be the nearest; our true Self, however, is in reality the nearest of all. 'It dwells in everything as its soul or inner nature, yet it is outside of everything'.[16] How can that be? If it dwells inside, how can it dwell outside? Space exists inside as well as outside. Take the space within this room which is confined by its walls. This space appears as inside the room; but what are the walls, are they separate from space? No. They exist in and through space, they are nothing but space. The space of the walls limits the space that is inside the room; but does it limit in reality? No. It is outside also. Can we limit the infinite space? By no means. Similarly, if we try to limit our Self by our mind, we fail, because mind is not large and strong enough to keep the Self out; sense-powers cannot limit it; physical forms can never divide it; because each one of these exists as related to the Self. The Self or *Atman,* when properly realized, appears as unlimited and infinite. We say that we are finite beings, but in reality we are not finite. There is only one infinite Existence which expresses itself through finite forms. As finite forms, existing in space, cannot live outside of it, so all these various individuals live in and through that infinite space of Reality which is called the absolute Self.

'He who realizes all beings in the Self, and the Self in all animate and inanimate objects of the universe, never hates anything or any being'.[17] Hatred proceeds from imperfect relative knowledge, which makes us perceive objects as separate from one another. But, when we see our true Self in others, how can we hate another without hating our own Self. As it is impossible to hate our true Self, so it would be impossible to hate the Self of any being. This is one of the results of Self-knowledge. Where Self-knowledge is, there can remain no

feeling of hatred. When hatred is gone, jealousy and all other selfish feelings, which we call wicked, disappear. What remains? The ordinary love, which stands in opposition to hatred, vanishes; but divine love begins to reign in the heart of the seer. True love means the expression of oneness. As love for body makes us feel one with the body, so love for the true Self makes us feel one with the true Self; and, if we see that Self in others, we cannot help loving them as we love our Self. Now we understand the meaning of 'love thy neighbour as thyself.' It is not an extraordinary teaching. Vedanta has always taught this truth. People of the Western world say that Christ was the only one who ever taught in this way, but they do not know that this is the very foundation of the ethics of Vedanta.

Love means the expression of oneness in thought, word and deed. 'Where all beings have become one with the Self, what delusion, what sorrow can there be to him, who has once realized this unity?'[18] Self-knowledge leads to realization of oneness with all beings. When all beings appear as parts of one universal Self, there is neither delusion, nor fear, nor sorrow, because there can exist no other thing outside of Self or *Atman* for which one can grieve or from which one can suffer. Sorrow and fear arise so long as there is the sense of duality or multiplicity. If all objects of fear and sorrow become one with the all-pervading divine Self, then fear and sorrow must vanish. But so long as we think of other beings which exist outside of our Self, we cannot avoid grief and suffering which arise on their account. In absolute oneness, however, there cannot remain fear, sorrow, suffering, separation, or self-delusion. This is another result of Self-knowledge.

Some people may think that Vedanta teaches us to be selfish, but this is far from being true. The self becomes dead; the lower self vanishes, and, with its disappearance, all selfishness is destroyed. The word 'Self' must not be taken for lower self of selfishness. It stands for *Atman*, the higher Self, which is our divine nature. There is no other expression in English by which we can convey the real meaning of *Atman*. We shall avoid confusion, therefore, if we use the Sanskrit word *Atman* to express our true Self. Then, no one will mistake it for selfishness. 'The *Atman* has pervaded all, effulgent, incorporeal,

scatheless, untouched by brain or nerve centres, pure, sinless, a poet (*kavi*), wise, omnipresent, self-existent, he has disposed all things aright for eternity'.[19] That *Atman* (Self), who is the centre of the universe, is all-pervading. Wherever our mind goes, there goes the *Atman*. It is the source of the light of intelligence; it is pure, spotless, sinless. Here you will notice that Vedanta teaches that we are not born in sin and iniquity, but that our *Atman* or true Self is sinless. By this it does not encourage us to do sinful acts, but it tells us that the moment one acquires Self-knowledge, from that moment one ceases to do anything wicked. The *Atman* is in the body, but it has no body. It is formless, that is, beyond gross and subtle forms. There are forms which we cannot see except through the most powerful microscope. Even such minutest forms do not affect the Self. It is absolutely beyond all forms; but at the same time it can appear in any form, and all forms exist in it.

Atman is beyond all nervous activity, or the function of the brain. The materialists maintain that, when brain and nerve centres vibrate, self-consciousness is produced. But Vedanta contradicts their statement by saying: 'It is beyond the reach of nerve centres and untouched by brain powers.' It is not affected by the changes of the body; there may be variations in the colour or form of the physical body, or the body may be diseased or have some part mutilated, but that disease or mutilation will not produce any change in the true Self or *Atman*. Therefore, Self-knowledge makes one free from nervousness and other physical ailments.

The word '*kavi*' means poet, and also means the seer of things. Self is described as the greatest poet of the universe; this is one of the most beautiful expressions and attributes that can be given to Divinity—He is the poet, His poetry is the universe. He is also described as the greatest artist. His art we see in the sunrise and sunset. The sun, moon and stars are nothing but the paintings on infinite space by the hand of the almighty Artist.

True Self or *Atman* is above good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. Some people ask: How can it be above good and evil? Others say: It is only good. Good and evil, however, are two relative terms; evil exists in relation to good, and we

cannot separate the one from the other. If we wish to take good, we shall have to take evil also. So with virtue and vice; one cannot exist without being related to the other. The absolute Self is above all relativity; therefore, it is above good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. 'There is no other seer than this *Atman*, no other knower.' Who can be the knower of the universe? There is one eternal Knower who knows the existence of all objects, and the knower in us is only a part of that eternal Knower or God. The vast majority of mankind do not know this great truth; the preachers do not teach it, because they themselves do not understand it. God is the Knower of all, then the Knower in us is a part of God. Vedanta tells us to realize the individual knower first; then will the Knower of the universe be known.

The *Atman* or true Self is never the object of knowledge, but it is always the subject. The cosmic or universal Knower is the same as that which people worship as God. Thus, by the light of Vedanta, we can see God close to our souls; but in the scriptures of special religions He is made remote, He is driven far out of our reach. Vedanta brings Him nearer than anything we possess. Although this *Atman* is all-pervading, yet it is beyond everything; it dwells in all things, still it is not the same as anything. It is never affected by phenomenal conditions. It transcends the changes of nature, yet it permeates nature. It is its own cause; in it cause and effect are identical. The *Atman* has no cause, yet it is the cause of all; and, at the same time, it is beyond the law of cause and effect. The Self has existed by itself from the beginningless past and will continue to exist throughout eternity; no one can see its beginning or its end, because beginning and end refer to time, and our search after them, being within the sphere of mental activity, is also subject to time. We may search for the beginning and end of the phenomenal universe, but as the *Atman* (Self) is above all thought and beyond time and space, it can have neither end nor beginning.

'It is all-knowing.' All relative knowledge is only a partial expression of that wisdom which constitutes the nature of the *Atman*. Now, we see that the attributes which people generally give to God, such as, He is omniscient, omnipotent, all-pervading, eternal, infinite, are also given by Vedanta to the

Atman or true Self. True Self is the soul of our souls. Self-knowledge reveals that the attributes of God are also the attributes of the *Atman*. 'Those who do not realize this true Self, dwell in the darkness of ignorance and go through the misery and sufferings which exist in that darkness'.[20] They are always fearful and unhappy. They fear death and everything that threatens their earthly existence, and they make their life miserable by attaching themselves to a particular form of manifestation which they are afraid of losing. They love sense-enjoyments and worldly pleasures, they feel disappointed and discontented, if they do not find these, and they consider that this earthly life has no other higher aim or ideal. The life of such persons is nothing but a continuous chain of fear and unhappiness. Those who are rich, fear loss of fortune; those who have reputation and high position, are afraid of losing them; while every man or woman suffers from the fear of disease and death. Do you suppose that these people will ever enjoy true happiness on this earth? No. They alone are truly happy, who have become absolutely free from fear. Perfect happiness comes and all fear is conquered when Self-knowledge is gained. For this reason each one of us ought to make constant efforts to acquire it in this life. The light of Self-knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance and frees us from fear, sorrow, misery, birth, and death, as also from bondage, imperfection, and delusion, which proceed from ignorance.

This ignorance is likewise the mother of selfishness. It has the power to veil the divine and absolute *Atman* and to make us identify our true Self with the material body. Thus, when forced by the inscrutable power of ignorance (*avidya*), we forget our real Self, think of ourselves as the sons or daughters of mortals, we become finite and subject to such limitations as are understood by the term 'selfishness'. Self-knowledge destroys ignorance and makes one absolutely unselfish. Blessed is he who lives in the sunshine of Self-knowledge, having risen above the clouds of fear and selfishness, which gather in the night of ignorance. What is this world? It is produced by ignorance and bound by fear. Knowledge of the Self destroys all worldliness, brings spiritual strength, and makes one fearless, as God is fearless. Does He fear anything? How can He? The moment we realize that God dwells in us, how can

we fear? How can we have fear of death, when we know that death merely means a change from one body into another, and that our true Self or *Atman* is unchangeable? Those who do not possess Self-knowledge are miserable, and will be born again and again on this plane of ignorance until they have learned to realize their true Self.

Self-knowledge is the only source of happiness; it will lead to perfection and freedom. You may seek freedom, but how can you obtain it when you have become a slave of fear and earthly conditions? You are a part of Divinity. Feel it, realize it, and all these ties will drop away, and you will be free. The attainment of this freedom through Self-knowledge will bring to you the realization of your oneness with Divinity. Then, you will be able to say: 'That light which I see in the sun is in me; and that which is in me, is in the sun. I am the Lord of the body, senses, and mind, and I am also the Lord of all phenomenal objects'.

'I am the light of the universe, through me shine the sun, moon, stars, and the lightening. I have realized my true Self. I have realized the true Self of the universe and therefore I am one with the Absolute'.[21]

PRANA AND THE SELF

'May my speech be established in my mind; may my mind be fixed in my speech. O Divine Word! Thou hast manifested Thyself in the form of wisdom. Do Thou spread Thy powers through my words. Do not deprive me of the Truth. May I always dwell in the Truth. My salutations to the fire of wisdom, to the seers of Truth and to the Devas (bright spirits).

'O Divine Word! be propitious to us; stay in our spiritual space and be happy. Like the lord of light (the sun), constantly purify our hearts and reveal to our eyes that which is auspicious for us. Do not leave us.

'Peace, Peace, Peace to all living creatures'.[22]

CHAPTER III

PRANA AND THE SELF

Since the Vedic period, at least two thousand years before Christ, Self-knowledge has been in India not only the theme of sages and philosophers, but also the highest ideal of kings. Most of the early Hindu monarchs were, indeed, the great spiritual teachers of the country, although they did not belong to the Brahmin caste. There is a prevailing idea that the Brahmins were the only teachers of spiritual Truth in the beginning, while the duties of ruling and fighting were confined to the Kshatriya or warrior caste. Yet, in the great epic *Mahabharata,* it is told that some of the Brahmins fought battles, commanded the army and showed remarkable powers, courage, and ability, though they did not become rulers of the country. In the *Bhagavad Gita,* we read of Drona and Kripacharya, who were Brahmins by birth, but became noted generals, served on the battlefield, and were the teachers of the Kshatriyas in military science as it was known at that time. On the other hand, we find in the *Upanishads* and in the epics, that the Kshatriyas were the first teachers of the Brahmins in higher spiritual truths; Krishna, Rama, Buddha were all Kshatriyas. The Kshatriyas, being of the warrier caste, were bound by duty to protect the country, govern the nation, fight the enemies, and establish the reign of peace, justice and righteousness among the people. They were entitled, however, not only to become soldiers, commanders of the army, or to sit on the throne, but likewise to impart Self-knowledge to all sincere and earnest souls.

The Hindu rulers of those early days were not like the monarchs of today. They regarded life as something that had a meaning, and for them, this earthly existence was not worth-living until that meaning had been realized. Even in that early age, these royal seekers after Truth felt that those who perform the duties of their daily lives without knowing who they are and what they are in reality, are dwelling in absolute darkness. Therefore, after fulfilling their duties as Kshatriyas

and rulers of the country, they still found time enough to devote themselves to the pursuit of Self-knowledge.

There was a great Hindu monarch of ancient India, by name Divodasa, who lived in Benaras. Benaras was the Indian Athens of those days. It was the seat of education and the centre of religion, science, and philosophy. From prehistoric ages it had been the cradle of Oriental civilization and culture. Even at the time of Buddha, five hundred years before Christ, it was the stronghold of Hindu philosophy and religion; and Buddha could not have done anything if he had not been able to convince the learned scholars of Benaras. Divodasa, this famous and powerful ruler of Benaras, had a son who became renowned by defeating his fiercest enemies. It is said that he even conquered the *devas* the mythological gods or bright spirits. In the third chapter of the *Kaushitaki-Upanishad,* there is a story which describes how this young prince, Pratardana, by his wonderful courage and prowess conquered all the great ones on the human plane, and then came to the abode of the ruler of the *devas.*[23]

According to Hindu mythology, Indra, the god of Thunder, became the ruler of the *devas* through his righteous works and wisdom. Pratardana, the son of the mighty king Divodasa, went to the abode of Indra, dwelling in his heaven, with a desire to conquer him. He told how he had destroyed his enemies and vanquished the *devas.* Indra was somewhat dismayed at the sight of so great a hero, and did not know how he ought to receive him and what he should do to please him. So, after hearing the description of his powers and victories, Indra said to Pratardana: 'I am well pleased with thee and wish to give thee a boon. Choose a boon and I will be happy to grant it to thee'.[24] The prince answered: 'Do thou thyself choose that boon for me which thou deemest most beneficial for a man'.[25] He did not know what to ask for, but he knew that there was something which would be most helpful to all. Having in his mind the thought that people who are dwelling in ignorance and self-delusion and who do not understand the true nature of Being, ought to have something that would make their life worth living, he said: 'Grant me that boon which thou thinkest best for a man'.[26] Indra replied: 'That is not right; thou must choose thine own boon; no one who chooses,

chooses for another'.[27] The prince insisted, saying: 'The boon chosen by me is no boon for me'.[28] He would not choose because he did not know what would be most helpful to mankind, therefore he left it to Indra. Then Indra said to him: 'I am bound by my promise and I must be true to my words, so I must grant thee the highest boon that would be helpful and useful to all mankind'.[29]

Then again he said: 'Know me only; that is the highest and most helpful for man. Know me, my true Self.[30] He (Indra) meant by this, not his powers, not his glory, but his real Self—that which is signified by all such expressions as *I, me, mine,* and *thou, thee, thine.* He who has known this true Self, gains unbounded power. If he commits any wrong, that wrong does not affect him. The knower of Self is the greatest of all, he is greater than kings, greater than the mightiest emperor; he possesses all the virtues that are described in the scriptures of the world and nothing can make him fall from the glory of Self-knowledge. Then Indra praised Self-knowledge by saying: 'I have conquered all the demons, I have destroyed those demons who had three heads, one hundred heads. I have done many cruel deeds, but all these horrible acts could not affect me, because I possess the knowledge of the supreme Self. Although I have performed many inhuman deeds, yet see my glory, strength, and power: not a single hair of my head has been injured by them. He who knows me thus, is never harmed in his life by any sinful act, neither by theft nor by the murder of his father, mother, or a wise Brahmin. If he is about to commit a terrible sin, the expression of his face does not change'.[31]

Thus, Indra praised Self-knowledge. He did not mean that the knower of Self should ever perform all such sinful, cruel, and inhuman deeds. He wanted to show that power of Self-knowledge is greater than any other power that exists anywhere in the world; that it purifies the heart and soul of the worst sinner and washes off the most horrible sins that a human being can commit. The murder of either father, mother or both, or the revered spiritual master, all these unpardonable sins cannot corrupt the divine power of Self-knowledge, which purifies the souls of all who possess it.

After praising Self-knowledge, Indra said: 'I am *prana,*

know me as *prana,* life. Worship me as the conscious Self, the source of intelligence'.[32] *Prana* is the Sanskrit word for life-force; life and intelligence are inseparable; wherever there is life, there is intelligence in some form or other. Meditate on me as life and intelligence. Life is *prana, prana* is life; life is immortality and immortality is life'.[33] Here we must understand that life never dies. Life in itself is immortal and indestructible; it cannot change. We do not see life growing from the lifeless. Life in the abstract is always the same whether or not it expresses itself outwardly. The expressions may vary, but the life-force is one and unchangeable. When we do not see the manifestation of life we say it is dead; but life-force does not die. Very few people can understand this. Where life is, death cannot exist. We may say a child is born, a child grows, but the life of the child is not subject to growth; if it were subject to birth and growth, it would be changeable, it would be mortal. That which we call life-force is free from birth, decay and death; all these changes take place in the forms through which the immortal life-force manifests itself. We speak of a child or a plant as growing, but from the very beginning the life-force is the same; the manifestations of some other powers with which life is attended, appear in different ways at various stages of the evolution or growth of the animal or vegetable organism.

'*Prana* is life, life is immortality; as long as the *prana* dwells in the body, there is life. By *prana* one obtains immortality in the other world'.[34] If we know what true life is, and feel that we are one with life and inseparable from it, then, we can realize that we are immortal, because life does not die, it does not proceed from non-life. If we try to trace the origin of life, going back in imagination as far as we can, we shall never be able to discover, as its cause, non-life or something dead. Life always proceeds from life. It has existed from the beginningless past, and we cannot think of its ever being subject to death or destruction; therefore, it is eternal. But so long as life-force manifests itself through a body, the body appears as living; this is the secondary expression of true life-force. Here we do not think of the life-force or *prana,* but of the form which moves and does certain work. We say: 'He lived so long'. 'His lifetime consisted of so many years, three

or four score', all these expressions, however, signify the secondary manifestation of *prana*. Life in its primary sense is immortal. When that *prana* or life-force expresses itself, then the organs are alive, the senses perform their functions, the mind thinks, and the intellect acts.

Again this *prana* or life-force is inseparable from intelligence; we cannot separate intelligence from the force which makes everything of the universe move. The Self has two powers, which express themselves as intelligence and as the activity of *prana* or life-force. Intelligence is that which is the source of consciousness; there is no English term by which we can express it. It is called in Sanskrit *prajna*. It cannot be translated as *knowledge*, because knowledge means understanding, which is a function of the intellect; but *prajna* refers to the source of all knowledge and consciousness.

Indra continued: 'He who knows me as one with life (*prana*) and intelligence (*prajna*), as immortal, indestructible, and unchangeable, has life to its fullest extent on this earth, and after death, resides in heaven and enjoys everlasting life'.[35]

Here Indra used the word '*prana*' for life-force, but the young prince thought that he must have meant sense-powers, because *prana* is also used to signify the power of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or touching, the power of speech, the powers of seizing, moving, excreting, and generating, and that by which all the organs of the body perform their functions. Therefore, he said: 'Some say that all the *pranas* or sense-powers become one; for otherwise no one could see, hear, speak, and think, at the same time. After having become one, each of the senses perceives separately'.[36] Thinking that by *prana* were signified the activities of the sense-organs, he wanted to know which of these was particularly meant by Indra. He maintained that although life or *prana* was one, still the sense-organs performed their fuctions separately in succession.[37] Two sense-perceptions do not occur at the same moment, there must be a minute interval of time between them. For instance, when we see a sight and hear a sound apparently at the same time, proper analysis will show that the one sensation is followed by the other; we cannot have various perceptions simultaneously. According to the psychologists of ancient India, mind perceives the objects of sensation one at a time. When one sense-organ performs its

function, others remain quiet; the interval may be infinitesimally small, we may not grasp it with ordinary attention, still they rise in succession leaving between them a very minute interval of time. So the young prince did not understand what particularly sense-activity was referred to by Indra. After raising this question, he kept silence.

Indra replied: 'It is true that all these senses perform their functions at certain intervals and that each one of them is great; but nevertheless there is another force which is higher than all the sense-powers. That force is pre-eminent among all other powers'.[38] It is not the power of seeing or hearing that makes us alive. Blind and deaf persons do not see and hear, but still they live. The power of speech does not manifest itself in a dumb man, yet he is alive. A man may live having lost the power of smelling, tasting or touching. Infants and idiots live though deprived of the thinking-power of the mind.[39] One may not have memory, still one will be called living. All this shows that, that which makes one alive is not the same as the power of seeing, hearing, speaking, smelling, tasting, touching, or thinking. Again, a man may lose his arms and may not be able to seize anything, still we do not call him dead. The loss of one's legs or other organs of work does not, as we see around us, destroy the life-force or the *mukhya-prana*. Therefore, the life-force is distinct from the power of perception or sense-activity. Yet at the same time these sense-organs will not perform their functions if they are separated from the life-force.

The life-force or *mukhya-prana* is something independent of the sense-powers, but the sense-powers are dependent upon life-giving *prana*. Where life-force is unmanifest, the sense-organs may remain perfect, but there will not be any expression of the sense-powers in the form of perception of sensation. The eye of a dead man may be perfect, the optic nerve may be in good condition, the brain cells may be in a normal state, but as the life-force is not working in that body, the sense-organs must remain dead, without performing their functions, without producing any sensation. Thus, we can see that all the sense-organs remain active in the body, because *prana*, the source of all activity, is there, and because the life-force governs and regulates all the senses. Therefore, in the Vedas

it is said: 'One should worship *prana,* the life-force, which keeps the universe alive'. If you can understand what that life-force is, you have understood the secret of the universe as well as that which keeps you alive.

All the scientists, anatomists, and evolutionists are trying to know the nature of that life-force, but have they succeeded ? No. Some say, it is a molecular attraction, others believe that it is the result of physico-chemical forces ; but are they sure of what they say ? What progress has science made in her attempt to find out the source of life-force? Science has rejected the idea that the life-force is independent of the mechanical forces of nature ; but she cannot tell us definitely the cause of vital energy. There have been debates and discussion on this subject among the scientists of different countries at all times ; still the problem is unsolved. If we can understand the life-force of the universe, we have understood the living God ; because says Vedanta, life-force is inseparable from the Being who is worshipped as God.

What is God ? He who keeps everything alive, and upon whom depend all other activities, sense-powers, and the functions of the gross physical body. Indra said: '*Prana* alone having animated this body makes it rise up. It alone is the conscious Self. What is *prana* is *prajna,* self-consciousness ; and what is self-consciousness is also *prana.* They both live in the body together, and together they pass out of it'. 'That life is the same as our self-consciousness'.[40] Have you seen self-consciousness where there was no life ? It is impossible. Wherever there is self-consciousnesss, there must be life ; self-consciousness and life are inseparable. You may say, there is no self-consciousness in trees and plants ; how do you know, it is not there ? Is it because they have no brain ? They may not have the same self-consciousness as that of those who have brains, but they have nerves of their kind. How do you know a sensitive plant does no feel ? All such dogmas of the theologians as that life is granted by the Creator to human beings alone, who would glorify His name, no longer appeal to us. Even the scientists of today, like Ernst Haeckel, are beginning to realize that every plant has its soul, that every cell has its own life, that every atom has its soul ; and wherever there is soul there is also intelligence, the source of self-consciousness.

It may be expressed imperfectly, it may be latent or waiting for proper manifestation; still wherever there is life, there is some kind of intelligence; and wherever there is intelligence, there must be life.

As we see in all living creatures, when life is gone, self-consciousness is also gone; so, when life is in a state of abeyance, either in faintness or in swoon, when the life-force does not manifest itself in the form of organic functions or sense activities, self-consciousness at that time remains latent. Then, Indra said: 'When a man goes into the deep sleep state, where he sees no dream whatever, his mind is absolutely at rest, is enveloped, as it were, with a veil of ignorance'.[41] Sometimes, when you wake up after dreamless sleep, you feel as though you have come out of a realm of deep ignorance; in that state of sound sleep, do you know what becomes of your sense activities,—the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling? They remain latent in *prana,* they go back and take refuge in that life-force.[42] When the life-force remains inactive, then other powers also become inactive. In deep sleep we do not speak, see, or smell anything. If there be the noise of a gun right near our ear, we do not hear, neither does our mind think or imagine; all mental and physical powers remain potential, and come out as we wake up. The first awakening is visible in vital actions. In dreamless sleep (*sushupti*), however, the life-force is not entirely separated from the central part of the body, because the subconscious activity of the *prana* is then manifested in the heart beat, in the circulation, digestion, and in the respiratory process. If that force which causes the motion of the heart and lungs stop, there is absolute separation of the *prana* from the organs, then we do not wake. This is death. But in deep sleep we become one with *prana*, which absorbs all our conscious activities, and in the waking state they all return to their respective organs; the senses then begin to perceive and perform their functions.

Indra illustrates this by saying: 'And when he awakes, then, as from a blazing fire, sparks shoot forth in all directions, so the sparks of the various sense-powers proceed each towards its place and come in contact with external objects'.[43] When a spark takes possession of the eye, it illumines the object of sight, the form and colour; another spark comes out and falls in the

organ of hearing, it then illumines what we call sound. Similarly, other sense-powers proceed from *prana* like sparks. The mind itself is another spark which performs various mental functions. But 'when a person is going to die, being ill and falling into weakness and faintness, all the sense-powers go back to their source ; then people say: 'His mind has departed, he cannot hear or see, speak or imagine. Then he becomes one with *prana* alone'.[44] As the *prana* leaves the body it takes with it all the sense-powers, which are dependent upon it. The dying man carries with him the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, seizing, moving, speaking, excreting, generating, and the power of thinking as well as self-consciousness. All the vital forces and subconscious activities of the organs are also withdrawn when *prana* leaves the body. Along with these, the objects like colour, sound, odour, etc., that are illumined by the senses, are also taken away. When the power of seeing, for example, is drawn away all colours and all forms, which can be perceived by the eye, go with it.

We shall see presently that the objects of the senses are inseparable from these sense-powers ; when the latter are withdrawn, the objects are taken with them. If all the sounds and words which we utter be stopped, then the power of speech will remain latent, and with it will go all the names which can be illumined by the power of speech. For the same reason, when the power of smell is withdrawn, all the perception and sensation of odour accompany it; and all thoughts, percepts, concepts, memory, volition and ideas disappear when mind and intellect cease to be active. This absolute and complete oneness with *prana* happens at the time of death. Since *prana* and self-consciousness are inseparable, and since together they live in the body and together they go out of it, a man in this state is said to be dead.

All these organic powers which have been withdrawn with *prana* remain with him after death and he manifests them in another form. As in the state of waking after deep sleep mental and physical forces rise like sparks from a burning fire, so after the sleep of death all the latent powers come out from *prana*, manufacture other organs and perform their functions respectively.[45] What is that force which manufactures the sense-organs ? It is the *prana* or life-force, which contains in a

potential from all the desires, impressions, and tendencies of the previous existence.

When the activities of the senses, which reveal their objects, become latent, all sensations stop, and consequently ceases the relative existence of sense-objects. The Self is the centre of intelligence and consciousness. It is clothed with the *prana* or life-force, a portion of which manifests itself subjectively as sense-powers, while other portions express themselves as objects of sensation. As the objects of perception cannot exist without being related to the perceiving sense-power or subjects, similarly the subjects only exist as such so long as they are related to the objects.

Here we should remember the truths which we have already learned: that the sense-powers depend upon *prana* or life-force, that *prana* and self-consciousness are identical, and that objects are related to sensations, because they cannot exist as independent of the powers of perception. There will be no colour in relation to us, if our power of sight be dead. For the same reason, that which we call sound only exists in relation to the power of hearing. Similarly, it can be shown that the external objects which we perceive are inseparable from our sensations of them, and these in turn depend upon our sense-powers. An object of perception may be compared to a piece of cloth. As a cloth which is made out of threads is identical with the thread (for what is a piece of cloth but threads woven together ?), so an object of perception, being woven together of sensations and sense-powers, is identical with them. The threads of sensations and sense-powers, again, are twisted out of the forces of *prana*. The whole universe, therefore, depends upon *prana* or self-consciousness. Self is the centre of the universe as well as the centre of each one of us. It is the foundation of life, inseparable from *prana*, and the producer of all sense-powers. Indeed, Self is the origin of the phenomenal universe.

Again, it is said that this *prana* or self-consciousness is not many, but it is one. The life-force in you is the same as the life-force in me and in others. As life-force is one, so self-consciousness is one. The self-consciousness in you is also the same as it is in me and in all living creatures. It is one throughout the universe. We can only infer from external signs the

nature of self-consciousness in other individuals and compare it with our own.

Self-consciousness lies at the root of all knowledge. For without self-consciousness speech does not make known any word ; we do not perceive it. Without self-consciousness the ear cannot reveal any sound. When our self-consciousness is centred upon one particular object, we do not see things which may lie in close contact with our eye.[46] For instance, when you are looking at something intently on the street, other objects may pass by in front of you. but you do not notice them though your eyes are there. So with sounds, when your mind is concentrated on one particular sound you do not hear other sounds ; a person may be calling. but you do not hear it ; so, when your mind is concentrated on any particular thought or idea, you do not see, hear, smell or taste, or have any other sensation. In short, without self-consciousness, no thoughts can rise in succession and nothing can be known. Therefore, it is said: 'That which is the real seer we must know ; we must not try to know the speech or the words, we must know the speaker, the Self. Where is the speaker ? Find it out. Who is the seer ? Find it out. Let no man find out what speech is, but let him find out the speaker. Let no man find out what sight is, but let him find out the seer. Let no man find out what sound is, but let him know the hearer'.[47]

Scientists are trying to find out what sound is, but they do not care to know who is the hearer. Vedanta philosophers, on the contrary, go to the bottom of things ; they do not care whether or not sound is the vibration of air. In order to become a sound, any kind of vibration must be related to our power of hearing ; if our power of hearing be withdrawn, who will hear the sound ? So what is the use of wasting our time in trying to know what sound is ? First, let us know the true nature of the sense-powers, then their source, and ultimately the Knower of all sense-objects. 'Let no man try to find out tastes of food, let him know the knower of tastes. Let no man try to know what pleasure and pain are, let him know the knower of pleasure and pain. Let no man try to discover what joy or happiness is, let him know the knower of joy and happiness.[48] Let no man try to know the thought, let him know the thinker. These objects of perception have reference to

prajna or self-consciousness, and the subjects or sense-powers have reference to objects. Objects have relation to subjects, subjects are related to objects; if there were no objects, there would be no subjects, and *vice versa*. For, on either side alone nothing can be achieved'.[49]

Self-consciousness is described by Indra as the centre of the wheel of a chariot. This body is the chariot and the outer circumference of the wheel is made up of sense-objects, the spokes are the sense-powers, which reveal these objects, and the nave, on which the spokes are fixed, is the *prana*, the life-force.[50] Thus, the objects are placed on the subjects (spokes) and the subjects on *prana*. The *prana* or life-force, which is inseparable from intelligence and self-consciousness, is imperishable, immortal, and blessed; that is the true Self. True Self is not increased by good acts, or decreased by evil deeds. The sins of the world do not corrupt or change the nature of this true Self. The true Self is neither virtuous nor sinful, but it is always divine and perfect. Good and evil deeds affect the ego, the doer and actor, and bring in return the results which the ego reaps. We shall have to understand that all good and evil works are dependent upon self-consciousness and life-force or *prana*. The source of consciousness and intelligence is the guardian of the world, the producer of all phenomena of the universe, and that is my true Self'.[51]

'And this Self-knowledge will help all humanity in the path of immortality and perfection, which leads to the abode of peace and happiness'.

SEARCH AFTER THE SELF

'May all the functions of our minds, works of our bodies, and activities of our senses, please the almighty Brahman, who is described in the Vedanta; may we not forget Him; may we realize His presence in us; may we not be forsaken by Him; may all Divine qualities adorn our souls and bring peace to our minds'.

'Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us all'.[52]

CHAPTER IV

SEARCH AFTER THE SELF

The ancient mythology of the Hindus, which resembles in many respects Greek mythology, describes how gods and demons took human forms and lived like human beings on this earth. Even in the earliest *Upanishads,* we find accounts of such *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons) living together and fighting. It is told that the first-born Lord of the universe, Prajapati, once said to the gods and demons: 'Why are you fighting for power and supremacy ? The knowledge of the Self alone brings peace to the knower. The Self or *Atman* is sinless, free from old age and death, sorrow and suffering, hunger and thirst. Its desires are true and never unfulfilled ; and its thoughts are always true. This Self must be sought after by all. Whosoever realizes the Self, obtains whatever he wishes ; his desires are fulfilled, all powers come to him, and he becomes master of all worlds and of all the realms that exist on this earth as well as in the heavens'.[53]

The gods and demons, who were ambitious and unhappy, thought after hearing this that it was a very easy thing then to become lord of the world and master of everything. Here begins the story, given in the *Chhandogya-Upanishad,* one of the oldest and most authentic writings on Vedanta. It belongs to the *Sama-Veda,* that portion of the Vedas which laid the foundation of the science of music in India. The scale of seven notes was first used in the hymns of the *Sama-Veda,* which were put into music and chanted or sung during religious rites and sacrifices.[54] The narrative tells that the gods and demons, being thus instructed by Prajapati, the first-born Lord of all creatures, were awakened to a desire to attain Self-knowledge. They inquired among themselves, how they could gain that knowledge, which would make them the most powerful of all beings, and they were determined to search for that Self (*Atman*), by knowing which all worlds are obtained and all desires fulfilled.

Here we should understand that demons are not evil spirits,

but they are like human beings, strongly attached to the pleasures of the sense-world. They know nothing of the higher ideals of life, they are materialistic in their views, and think that the body is all in all, and that everything is finished with the death of the body. They wish to rule over the whole universe, and their desires are never satiated; they always want more and more, and struggle constantly for power and strength. Human beings with such tendencies are described in the Vedas as *asuras* or demons; while *devas* or gods are those who are spiritual, righteous, self-sacrificing, who do not consider earthly enjoyments and worldly pleasures to be the final aim of life, and whose ideal is to gain spiritual strength and spiritual power, and to realize the absolute Truth.

These *devas* and *asuras* thought that, if they could send their leaders to some seer of Truth, then from him they could gather Self-knowledge. So the gods and demons went to their respective leaders, Indra and Virochana, and requested them to go in search after Self-knowledge. Although they had all the pleasures and comforts of life and whatever human beings could wish for; although they possessed all psychic powers, property, wealth, luxury, and could get everything they desired, still they were not satisfied. They coveted more strength, more power, and when they heard from Prajapati that there was something through which they could really become masters of the whole universe, they longed for it and were anxious to obtain it immediately.

Indra and Virochana, the rulers of the *devas* and *asuras*, set out separately to seek for a knower of absolute Truth, who had realized the Self and who could impart his knowledge to others. They gave up their luxuries and pleasures, left their fine raiment and other possessions behind. With modesty and simplicity of manner, the two leaders, without communicating with each other, sought out the greatest of all the knowers of Self, and approached him, with offerings in their hands in accordance with the custom of the country. For, in India people do not visit a temple, king, or spiritual teacher (*guru*) empty-handed. So they took fuel, butter, fruit with them, and with due reverence offered these to him, regarding him as their spiritual master. Having received his permission, they became his pupils and lived the life of purity and righteousness like

Brahmacharins, or students, for thirty-two years,[55] always serving him and obeying his wishes. One day, this holy master asked them why they had come to him and what they wanted. They replied: 'We have heard from Prajapati, the Lord of all creatures, that Self-knowledge can make one extremely happy and bring all powers and all objects of desire to the knower; that the real Self is free from sin and old age, unborn, and deathless, unaffected by hunger and thirst; that its desires are ever fulfilled and its thoughts are true and perfect. This Self must be searched after and realized. We have come to thee, O Lord, to acquire Self-knowledge'.[56]

The great master, wishing to examine whether the understanding of these pupils was purified or not, did not instruct them in the highest Truth at the outset, but gave some suggestions, by which they could search out and discover the real Self that dwells within all. The best teacher is he who directs his students step by step in the path of realization and who makes them investigate the Truth by their own exertion. So the Divine master, who was Prajapati himself in the form of a *guru,* said to them: 'The person that is seen in the eye is the real Self (*Atman*). He is free from sin, sorrow, suffering, and birth; immortal and fearless. By knowing him one can obtain all worlds and all desires'.[57] Hearing this, the minds of the pupils were confused. They could not understand what the master meant by the expression: 'The person that is seen in the eye is the *Atman,* the true Self'. They thought that he must mean the shadow that is seen in the pupil of the eye. When we look at a person's eye, we see in it the image of a small figure, the reflection of ourselves; the master, however, did not mean that. He referred to the real agent of seeing, the ruler of all the senses, who is seen through the senses by the pure-hearted Yogis alone. Thus, misunderstanding the true meaning, the disciples asked: 'Bhagavan, who is that which is seen in a mirror and perceived in the water? Is he the same person as the one who is seen in the eye?'[58] The master, knowing that his pupils had not understood the true spirit, replied: 'That real Self indeed is seen in all these'.[59] Know it and realize it. Furthermore, to test his pupils' power of understanding, he continued: 'Go and look at yourselves in a bowl of water, and come and tell me whatever you do not understand

about the Self."[60] The obedient pupils went and looked in the water, and, seeing the reflection of their bodies, they came back and said: 'Yes, sir, we have seen what you meant.' The master asked: 'Have you seen the Self or what?' The disciples answered: 'We have seen ourselves altogether from head to foot, a perfect picture even to the hair and nails'.[61] In order to bring them out of this confusion the master said: 'After having your hair and nails cut, put on your best garments, adorn yourselves with ornaments and look again in the bowl of water'.[62] Following his instructions, they cleaned themselves, and wearing beautiful dresses and rich ornaments, they looked at their own reflection in the water. The spiritual master then asked: 'Do you see the Self?' They said: 'Revered sir, we see ourselves just as we are now, clean, well-dressed and well-adorned'. The master replied: 'That is the Self, the immortal *Atman,* which is free from fear and sorrow'. Know it and realize it. The disciples went away satisfied in their hearts. Prajapati, seeing them at a distance, cried out: 'You have departed without acquiring the knowledge of the true Self; whoever among you, whether gods or demons, will follow this doctrine will perish.' But Indra and Virochana paid no heed to his words. They thought that they had realized the Self and went home feeling content.[63]

Now Virochana, who had understood that the body was the Self, went to the *asuras,* the demons, and preached the doctrine which he had learned. He taught them the most materialistic ideas, like those of the atheists and agnostics: 'The body is the Self; the body alone is to be worshipped and served. By glorifying the self and serving the body one becomes master of the worlds and obtains everything'. The demons, following his instructions, became absolutely materialistic in their views and began to decorate and worship their gross physical forms.

Even in the present age, many such demons are to be found in this world. Those who uphold atheistic, agnostic, and selfish doctrines possess demoniac tendencies. They care for nothing but their own bodies and do not feel for others. They are not charitable, neither do they give alms to the poor. They have no faith in anything higher than their own material form. The demons of today offer no sacrifice to God. They

decorate the body of the living or of the dead with flowers, perfumes, ornaments, and fine raiment, and vainly imagine that, by thus worshipping the body, they will conquer the worlds.

The lord of the *devas,* Indra, however, had better sense than the ruler of the demons; he went home, but he hesitated to preach before the gods. Remembering what the Lord of all creatures had described, that 'the *Atman* or Self must be free from hunger, thirst, birth, death, and sorrow, that it is immortal and fearless', he said to himself: 'This body cannot be the true Self, because it is subject to hunger and thirst, and is not free from any of these imperfections. How could the master have meant by true Self the shadow of this body, when the body is subject to birth, disease, and death? I see no good result from this doctrine.' Thus dissatisfied, Indra determined to return to his master as a pupil with offerings in his hand. When he came again the master said to him: 'You went away with Virochana satisfied in your mind that you had learned the truth and gained the knowledge of the Self; for what purpose have you returned?' Indra replied: 'Bhagavan, how can the shadow of the body be the true Self, when it goes through constant changes? If the body is well-decorated with flowers and beautiful costumes, the Self (shadow) has a different appearance. If one loses one's eyes, the shadow (the Self) will look as though blind; that Self (shadow) will be lame if the body is lame; crippled, if the body is crippled; and will perish with the death of the body. Therefore, that changeable shadow cannot be the unchangeable self. I do not see any good result from such a doctrine. Please explain my difficulty and make me understand the true Self.' The master replied: 'O, Indra, so it is indeed. I shall explain to you the true Self. Live with me as my disciple for another thirty-two years'.[64]

Indra lived with his master and served him for another thirty-two years.[65] One day the master, being pleased with the purity, chastity, and devotion of his pupil, instructed him thus: 'That which enjoys all dreams during sleep is the true Self. It is the immortal and fearless Brahman (the Absolute). Know it, realize it, and be conscious of it'. Hearing this, Indra went home satisfied in his heart.[66] But, before speaking to the *devas,* he found another difficulty. He understood, the Self

(*Atman*) which enjoys dreams is not the same as the shadow of the body, it is not affected by physical changes. It is true that this Self is not blind when the body is blind, or lame when the body is lame, nor is it injured if the body be injured ; but how can the seer of dreams be immortal, when it is subject to change and fear, and suffers pain in unpleasant dreams ? Thus thinking, he said: 'I do not see good in this doctrine ; I must go again and ask my master concerning this perplexity'.[67] Indra went to Prajapati, his spiritual teacher, the third time, and questioned him thus: "How could that changeable seer of dreams be the true Self, which is unchangeable, immortal, free from sin, hunger, sorrow, suffering, birth, and death?" The master replied: "O, Indra, you are right. I will explain to you again, stay with me another thirty-two years".[68]

At the end of that time the master said: "In sound sleep that which enjoys perfect rest and sees no dreams is the true Self or *Atman,* which is immortal".[69] Indra thought, how can that be the immortal Self, which is not conscious of itself or of anything else? No knowledge or consciousness remains in this state ; everything is destroyed then. Did the master mean by Self the destruction of all thoughts, feelings, sensation, consciousness, and knowledge? In deep sleep state, we have neither feelings, nor dreams, nor sensations, nor consciousness of the body, or of the external world. He could not undertand how that state of annihilation could be the true Self, so he came back and asked the question: "Bhagavan, dost thou mean that true Self is the state of absolute annihilation of consciousness, knowledge, sensation, and feelings?" The master answered: 'No, that is not the true Self'. Here we should notice how the great spiritual master gradually directs the mind of the disciple from the gross physical body, through the abstract to the Absolute. True Self is the Absolute which is beyond all comprehension. If we start from this state of dreamless sleep, rising above all feelings, thoughts, and sensations, and, if we can go still further, we shall find our true Self. Now the master was extremely gratified to see his return and said: "Your understanding is profound ; I will explain to you what true Self is. Live with me for another five years and no more".[70]

At the end of the last five years the master imparted the highest knowledge to his faithful pupil: "This gross physical body cannot be the Self, it is subject to death ; in fact, it is constantly attacked by death". The life of the body is nothing but a series of deaths or changes. Every particle of the body is continually changing, and if that change stops for a second, the body will live no more. 'By death this body is perpetually attacked ; death is always working in the body'. The word 'body' here includes all the sense-organs. The organs of the senses are also subject to similar changes ; consequently they are dying at every moment. 'The body is the abode or instrument of the Self, which is immortal and without body.' Through this instrument the Self or *Atman* comes in contact with the gross material world. If the true Self does not manufacture the body it cannot come in direct touch with the objects of the senses. The body, therefore, exists for the enjoyment of the Self ; it is the medium with which the Self is wrongly identified, which thinks, 'I am the body', and experiences heat and cold, pleasure and pain. But the ruler of this body is the Self, while the body is its abode.[71]

The real agent that perceives through the senses, is the true Self within us. Sensations are produced by the contact of material objects with the sense-organs. The gross objects, having forms, cannot directly come in close contact with the Self, unless it manifests itself through the physical form of the body. But formlessness is the true nature of the Self, who is the knower of this body, the enjoyer of sensations, and the doer of all actions. 'The Self', said the master, 'has no particular form'. It dwells within the body without having any special shape. We should bear in mind that our true Self is formless, although our body is with form, and then we should understand that the changes of the body do not affect the Self. Since the Self is formless, how can it be the same as the shadow of the body? The lord of the demons, having his intellect, covered with *tamas* or 'darkness of ignorance', and having an impure mind and an imperfect understanding, could not grasp the true meaning of the Self. The master waited for him to ask further questions, but as he went away satisfied in his heart that he had learned everything regarding the Self, Prajapati was not anxious to force upon him his knowledge of

the absolute Self or *Atman,* which he was utterly incapable of receiving. Virochana, therefore, did not acquire the knowledge of the true Self, which is formless and immortal.

All the organs of the senses, all sensations, in fact, everything connected with the body, is transitory; if we can realize this, we can know that the immortal Self cannot be one with the body. This formless Self dwells in the body for a time, and after leaving it, remains formless. 'So long as the Self (*Atman*) lives in the body and is identified with it, it is not free from pleasure and pain, but he, who knows the Self as separate from the physical abode, is untouched by pleasure and pain'. It may be asked: How can the formless *Atman* manifest itself through the body which has a form? Wind has no form, steam has no particular form, electricity is formless, but still they appear through forms.[72] When the wind blows, although it is formless, it comes in direct contact with objects with form, and shows its form and power by moving them; so, also, steam is without form, but, think how it manifests its gigantic force through engines and locomotives. The atmosphere is filled with electricity, which is imperceptible to our eyes and senses, yet it takes various forms, such as lightning and thunder. We do not feel the presence of atmospheric electricity; it required a Marconi to make us realize the value and importance of this invisible current in the atmosphere. The forces of nature are always invisible and formless. No one has ever seen or touched a force *per se*. Its existence can only be inferred by seeing its manifestation through forms. As all the imperceptible forces can be perceived by the senses under certain conditions, so the *Atman* or true Self, although imperceptible by nature, manifests its power and intelligence through the form of the physical body. How can we know the power of thinking except by its manifestation as thoughts? In the same manner the existence of the powers of seeing and feeling is inferred from their expressions. If the sight remains unmanifested in a man, we call him blind; and he is known as an idiot, whose mental and intellectual powers have become latent; but, when the expression of these powers begins, we see their outward effects. No one could have inferred what powers exist in the *Atman,* if the true Self had not manifested through the body the powers of seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, moving,

seizing, thinking, feeling, etc. They proceed from the *Atman*, the self-intelligent centre within us. In the state of ignorance these faculties of the soul appear as produced by the body, which is mistaken for the Self-; but, when the light of Self-knowledge begins to shine, the *Atman* reveals itself in its true nature as separate from the body and possessing all powers and intelligence. As an ignoramus cannot distinguish the wind, clouds, and electricity from etherial space, so a self-deluded soul cannot distinguish the true Self from the material organism. He, who possesses Self-knowledge, realizes that the *Atman* is the highest Being (*Purusha*). He is always happy, enjoying the play of life's sports under all conditions and never thinking of the material body, which is the mere abode of the intelligent Self.

The true Self, as we have already seen, possesses *prajna* or intelligence, and *prana* or activity. These two will be found at the foundation of the phenomenal universe. When these are latent or potential, there is no evolution. Vibrations of all kinds, cosmic or molecular and all kinds of motion are but the expressions of the activity of *prana*. Intelligence is manifested by human beings, as also by lower animals, the difference being only in degree and not in kind of manifestation. Wherever intelligence, or life-force, or any kind of activity is to be found, there is the expression of the Self. No knowledge is possible without self-consciousness. First, we must know ourselves before we can know anything. We may not know our real Self on account of imperfect understanding, still we possess some kind of self-consciousness. In Vedanta, these two, *prajna* and *prana* are described as the ultimate generalizations of all phenomena of the universe, and they proceed from the cosmic Self or Brahman, which is the source of all knowledge and of the activity of mind and senses.

Indra said: 'The Self is the greatest Being in the universe'. When properly understood we cannot separate this *Atman* or true Self from the universal or cosmic Being, because there exists only one ocean of the absolute Being which is called by various names like God, Brahman, *Atman* or Self. When that absolute Being expresses itself through our forms, it becomes our true Self, which is the source of mental and physical activity as well as of intelligence and consciousness.

All desires are certain forms of mental activity, and they could neither rise nor exist, if the self-conscious entity were not at the foundation of all activities. He who has acquired Self-knowledge, can live in the world performing all kinds of works, enjoying all pleasures, and, at the same time, without being affected or disturbed by any unpleasant condition of this world. The knowledge of Self protects the soul (*jivatman*) from being agitated by phenomenal changes. 'As a horse, being yoked to a carriage makes it move, so this conscious Self, being attached to the chariot of the body, makes it perform its functions by the power of *prana* and *prajna.*' Or, we may compare the body to an automobile, the propelling power of which proceeds from the true Self. If the Self be separated or disconnected from the organs of the senses, the eyes will see no sight, the ears will hear no sound, the nose will smell no odour, the tongue will taste nothing, and the hands and feet will perform no work. Indra continued: "The eye itself is only an instrument, the seer is behind the pupil of the eye. The real seer and knower of sight is the true Self. The nose is the instrument, but the knower of smell is the true Self. The tongue is the instrument of speech, but the knower of speech is the conscious Self. The ear is the instrument of hearing, but he who hear's is the true Self. He who thinks is the true Self, and the mind is his spiritual eye. Through this spiritual or divine eye the Self or *Atman* sees all pleasures and rejoices".[73] The mind, intellect, heart, are the instruments of the true Self, which is the knower of all mental activities.[74]

"The devas who are in the highest heaven, worship and meditate upon this Self, and, therefore, all worlds belong to them and they have obtained the fulfilment of all desires. He, who knows this Self and realizes it, obtains all worlds and all desires".[75] He who possesses Self-knowledge, is master of the world and also lord of everything like the gods of the highest heaven (*svarga*). In him all desires are fulfilled. He no longer desires anything of the world, nor does he seek happiness from outside. He possesses all power. In short, he is omnipotent, omniscient, and ever blissful. Thus, the great master explained the mystery of the true Self; and the earnest, sincere, and pure-hearted disciple realized it through his blessing. Indra served Prajapati one hundred and one years, as it is said in the story.

This shows that knowledge of the true Self cannot be easily acquired. Patience, perseverance, and earnest and sincere longing are the steps towards the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Indra became happy, and with gratitude in heart and salutations to his divine master, he went home and gave the fruit of his hard labour to the *devas*. All of them followed his directions, realized the Self and became masters of the world. Such is the power and greatness of Self-knowledge.

REALIZATION OF THE SELF

'May the Divine Self protect the teacher and the student. May he feed our souls with the nectar of eternal Truth. May he grant us spiritual strength. May our studies bring the realization of the Absolue!

Peace, Peace, Peace be unto us and to all living creatures'.[76]

CHAPTER V

REALIZATION OF THE SELF

A seeker after Self-knowledge, having performed all the duties of his life, discovered that the performance of duty could not bring peace to his mind. He had worshipped all the Devas or bright spirits, and had served the gods, but he had not received the knowledge of his real Self. Nor had he found satisfaction, although he had spent most of his time in devotion to the Supreme. Thus, learning that happiness, peace, and knowledge cannot be obtained from sense objects, or from earthly relations, and, realizing the ephemeral character of the phenomenal world, he could no longer remain content with the pleasure of a worldly life. So he renounced all his attachment to earthly things.

He also gave up studies, because he had discovered that the reading of the scriptures could not give Self-knowledge or absolute happiness, for, books and scriptures simply remind us of the higher truths, but they cannot bring the highest Truth within the reach of our soul. Those, who think that spiritual realiztion will come from the study of the scriptures and sacred books, are mistaken. The scriptures describe certain spiritual truths, such as the existence of God, divine love, salvation, but, by squeezing the pages of the book, no one can gain the realization of these truths any more than can get a drop of water by squeezing the pages of the almanac, in which the annual rainfall is mentioned. Before we can comprehend the spirit of any scriptural text, we shall have to realize the truth described in it.

Therefore the seeker after Self-knowledge abandoned all studies, and went to spiritual teacher who had known the Self. He approached him like a humble pupil, longing to acquire Self-knowledge. He had no other desire; he did not care to go to heaven or to enjoy celestial pleasures, and his sole aim and ideal in life was to know the true nature of the Self. Nothing else could please him, or make him happy. His heart was longing for that nectar of wisdom which flows in the soul of a knower of the *Atman*. Though he had come to understand that the physi-

cal body was not all in all and that the mind, the director of the senses, was not the unchangeable Reality, but was subject to constant change yet his thirst for knowledge was unquenched. Now he was eager to search after that unchangeable and absolute Truth, which is the soul of our souls and the ruler of all. Having bowed his head with deep reverence at the feet of the great spiritual teacher, the pupil asked: "Revered Sir, who is it that governs the mind, and by what power is the mind directed to perform its functions? What force guides the *prana* and the sense-powers? Why is it that we are so active, what is the cause of our activity? Who is this speaker of words? Who is the seer of sights? Who is the hearer of sounds? What power controls the organs of sight, hearing, and the other senses"?[77]

With this inquiry begins the *Kena-Upanishad,* which had been handed down through memory for generations before the art of writing was known in India. It shows how old and sublime are the teachings of Vedanta. Think of the antiquity and the deep meaning of these questions! We know that our mind is constantly active, and new thoughts and ideas are rising and going down. Mind wanders from here to there: sometimes it is in England, or in India, and sometimes it runs to the sun, moon, stars or other planets; hence, the seeker after self-knowledge asked: "Who is the director of this constant activity of the mind?" The master answered: "That which is the hearer of hearing, the thinker of thoughts, the speaker of speech, the mover of all activities of the sense-organs, the seer of sights".[78] Let us understand the meaning of "that which is the hearer of hearing". First of all we must inquire: What is meant by hearing? Hearing signifies that power, by which we perceive the existence of what we call sound, or, in other words, that organic activity which illumines the vibration of sound. So the hearer of hearing refers to the illuminator of the power of hearing, without which no sound can be heard. The spirit of the master's reply was: "The director of the mind is that which illuminates the powers of hearing, seeing, thinking, and of speech, as well as the knower of all the activities of our sense-organs".

The power of seeing, again, means that organic function, by which the object of sight is illuminated, or made known to us. The organ of sight, however, has not the power to produce

consciousness or intelligence. The power of seeing exists so long, as there is self-consciousness behind it. The organs of vision like the eyes, the ratinæ, the optic nerves, and the brain cells, together with all their activities, do not produce the consciousness of colour or any of the object of vision. In a dead person, all these organs may be in a perfect condition, but the perception of sight or the sensation of colour will not be felt by the body. The body itself has not the power to see or perceive any external object. Thus, by analyzing our perceptions, we can understand that the activities of the sense organs are unconscious by nature. The conscious Self, which illumines the organic functions, is the seer of sights, the hearer of sounds, the knower of all sensations, and the thinker of thoughts within us (*drasta, shrota, jnata* and *manta*). That intelligent Self, which is the source of consciousness and knowledge, must be known as the director of the mind and senses. When we have realized the cause of self-consciousness, we have understood the power which directs the mind.

According to Vedanta, mind is finer matter in vibration. The vibration of the mind substance produces perceptions and sensations, and reveals things which cannot be revealed by vibrations of grosser matter. In fact, functions of the mind are nothing but the vibrations of the finer particles of the etherial substance, called in Sanskrit *sattva*. But the vibration of this substance does not produce intelligence or consciousness (*prajna* or *jnana*). It is insentient and inert (*jada*) by nature. The mind substance appears as intelligent, when it is in close contact with the conscious Self or *Atman*, just as a piece of iron, having absorbed the heat of a furnace, appears as red-hot and is able to burn. The conscious Self may be compared to a magnet, which attracts the iron of the mind substance. When a piece of iron, being attracted by a magnet, moves, that motion is not natural with the iron, but is caused by its proximity and close contact with the magnet. As the very presence of the magnet produces activity in the iron, so the very presence of the Self (*Atman*) creates the activity of the mind substance. But the Self is not confined within the limits of the mind substance, because the true Self is beyond all relations of space and time.

The master continued: "Knowing this Self, the wise, being freed from this world, become immortal". Those who have

known that source of intelligence, the true Self, attain to immortality (*amritatva*) but those who have not known it, remain attached to the material body and senses, and, are, therefore, subject to birth and death. This is one of the results of Self-knowledge,—knowing our true Self we become immortal. Although the true nature of the soul, according to Vedanta, is immortal, and immortality is our birthright, still we do not attain it until we have become conscious of our immortal Self. So long as we think that we are mortal, we have fear of death. When the consciousness of the immortal Self is gained, all fear vanishes. Fear of death rises from ignorance, which makes us forget our immortal nature, and identify ourselves with the material body, which is subject to death. Thus, becoming one with the mortal body, we begin to fear death, and suffer from anxiety and misery. How can we expect to be free from fear of death, when we have identified our Self with the body, which will surely die? This fear, however, ceases to trouble him, who has realized that the body is like a shell, or a house, or a receptacle of the soul, which is deathless and immortal by nature. The soul manufactures the physical body, in order to fulfil certain desires and purposes of life. He who has known this truth, has risen above all fear. Therefore, it is said: "Those who have obtained the knowledge of the real Self, are called the wise and after the death of the body, they transcend the realm of birth and death".[79] This is the greatest object to be achieved in this world of relativity.

We have come here to fulfil a certain purpose. At present we may think that the highest purpose of earthly life is to gain material prosperity, success in business, fulfilment of ambition, and sense desires, but the time is sure to come when we shall realize that all these are momentary, and that the real purpose of life is much higher and more permanent. It is very difficult to understand the true purpose of life. Few people, in this world, have found a perfect standard, by which they can measure correctly whether or not they have fulfilled that purpose. Each one of us will have to find out what the highest ideal of life is. It is the attainment of Self-knowledge.

Self-knowledge brings to the soul absolute freedom and happiness. It is by Self-knowledge that we can obtain everything we desire. In this world, there is nothing higher than

the knowledge of the true Self. The knowledge which we now possess at present, is imperfect. It is only a partial expression of the all-knowing nature of the divine Self. That imperfection is due to the limitations or imperfect conditions of the *buddhi* or intellect, which reflects the divine wisdom. But, when the limitations are removed and the intellect is purified, true and perfect wisdom begins to shine within. As for example if the mirror be covered with mud, it will not have the power to reflect the light of the sun, so, when the mirror of the intellect or *buddhi* is covered with the mud of worldliness, it does not reflect the light of wisdom which emanates from *Atman,* the divine Sun. In order to learn this truth and the method, by which our intellect and heart may be purified, we need the help of a *Guru* or spiritual master. It should be remembered that knowledge is one, and not many. The same knowledge which we now possess, will be the highest knowledge, when it will reveal our immortal Self. Therefore, the wise men, who know the true Self, attain to immortality, even during this lifetime.

The pupil desired to see that Self, which is the director of the mind and the seer of the sight, and by knowing which, one becomes immortal. The master said: "The power of seeing cannot reveal the Self". The disciple thought: "If the eye cannot reveal the Self, its nature may be described".[80] To this the teacher replied: "Words fail to describe it; the mind cannot reach it. We cannot know it by mind, intellect, or understanding, how can anyone teach it?"[81] The Self is the thinker of thoughts. Mind can only think, when directed by the Self, who is beyond all thoughts. The very act of thinking presupposes self-consciousness, and all thoughts are only possible through self-consciousness; therefore, that which is above and beyond all thoughts, cannot be revealed by the mind or intellect. When the mind cannot think of it, how is it possible for the eye to see the true Self? The power of sight can reveal that which is in relation to our eyesight. The true Self can never be brought within the reach of sense perceptions. The master continued: "It is far from the known and also it is above the unknown. Thus we have heard from the ancient sages who taught us this."[82]

From ancient times the great seers of Truth have declared

that the real Self is neither known, nor knowable, and yet it is neither unknown, nor unknowable. Ordinarily we say: "We know a thing", "the knowledge of this book", etc. In this sense the *Atman* can never be known or made an object of knowledge.

Let us understand this clearly. When we speak of knowing a thing, we mean relative knowledge by intellect, and we convey the same idea when we say 'we do not know a thing'. Again, intellect can reveal those things which are related to the senses, or are subject to sense perception. It is more or less dependent upon sense powers, and, consequently, its sphere is very limited, for the senses can reach only within a small and limited circle. For instance, we hear sound through our ears, and the sound is audible within a certain degree of vibration. If the vibration of air be above or below that scale, we cannot hear; and although there may be a tremendous noise, still our ears are deaf to it. The same may be said of the eye. The range of sight is equally narrow. Now, we can see how very limited that intellect must be which depends upon these powers of perception. Therefore, that intellectual knowledge, which is related to sense-perceptions, is secondary knowledge. It cannot reveal the Self; hence, it is said that the 'Self is far from the known'. Furthermore, when we say 'we do not know this thing', we mean that we are conscious of our ignorance, we have the knowledge of the fact that we do not understand it, or know it by intellect. This ignorance is nothing but the lack of the intellectual apprehension of the thing, which we have called secondary knowledge. It is, however, revealed to us by another knowledge, which does not depend upon intellect or upon sense-perception. That apperception, by which we know that we do not know this thing, proceeds from the Self. Therefore, the Self is neither known nor unknown, but beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. 'We have heard it from our great masters who passed away before us.'[83] Although this *Upanishad* of the Sama Veda is very old, still the teacher here refers to the authority of other seers of Truth who preceded him and from whom Self-knowledge had been handed down through generations.

The master said: 'That which cannot be expressed by speech, but which is the speaker and director of speech, know that alone as the highest Self (Brahman); not that which people

worship here.'[84] Every attribute that we give to God, is not His attribute in reality. We call Him good, but He is not merely good; strictly speaking, He is beyond good and evil. We project our idea of good, mentally separate it from evil, and increasing its dimension, attribute it to the infinite Being and call Him good. At the same time we forget that, what is good demands something better, and that better again requires something, which is best. This shows how foolish we are, when we seem to be contented after calling Him good. God is in reality beyond our conception of good, which is relative and limited. In this manner, it can be shown that every attribute which we can think of, nay, every word which we can utter, is finite in its meaning and idea. Yet, if we go a little deeper, we shall find that no thought can exist and no word can be uttered, unless there be the self-conscious thinker and speaker behind. This self-consciousness is caused by the light of intelligence which proceeds from the Self. Therefore, the Self is the absolute Truth, inexpressible by speech. It is the illuminator of speech, but it can never be illumined by words.

Is Self (*Atman*) the same thing which is worshipped by all the great devotees and worshippers of God? Is it some personal God, dwelling outside of us and directing our minds and senses by will and command? Is Self the same Being, who is called by different names, as Father in heaven, or Allah, whom we worship with prayers and offerings? Is the *Atman* the same as an angel or bright spirit? What is it? Reading the mental question of his pupil, the master said: 'Not that which people worship here'. The worshipper of a personal God with a name and form is not the worshipper of the absolute Truth, because he worships the phenomenal God. Name and form being both phenomenal, our conception of the Divinity with a name and form, is phenomenal and anthropomorphic, or, in other words, we create an ideal God, by projecting our ideas, and give Him attributes, according to our conception, and, then, worship Him by offering Him our prayers. Prayers are nothing but words. We send these words to the personal God (*saguna* Brahman) in order to obtain certain results; but, He, to whom we pray with words, is not the director of speech. That Self which is in us and makes us speak and pray, is different from that which we worship with prayers. The personal God, with

a form and a name, is not the highest. This may seem strange to us, but we cannot deny it. God, with a name and a form, who can be described by words and thought, or by our minds, is not the Absolute. There is a saying: 'When God is known, He is no longer God, He is our imagination'. The absolute Divinity is different from that which is worshipped.

Again, that which can be thought by the mind, is not the absolute Truth or Brahman. Therefore, the master said: 'That which cannot be cognized by the mind, but by which all mental functions are cognized; know that to be your true Self (Brahman), but not that which people worship.'[85]

'That which cannot be perceived by the eye, but by which the eyes are made to see, know that to be the Self (the absolute Brahman), not that which people worship.'[86] 'That which cannot be heard by the ear, but by which the ear is made capable of hearing a sound, know that to be the Self (the absolute Brahman) not that which people worship.'[87] 'That which cannot be perceived by the power of smell, but by which the organ of smell perceives odour, know that to be the Self (the absolute Brahman), not that which people worship.'[88] These verses show that the true Self, who is the director of the mind and senses, is not the same as the personal God whom people worship, but it is one with Brahman, the absolute Truth.

Having heard this, the seeker after Self-knowledge went into meditation and searched for the illuminator or director of the mind, that which is beyond the reach of our thouhgts, words, and sense-powers. He spent some time in *samadhi* or the superconscious state, and realizing the Self, he returned to the ordinary plane of consciousness and said: 'I have known and realized the absolute Truth, I have known the Self.' The master replied: 'If you think that you know the Self, then you know very little of it.'[89] If you believe that you have known the absolute Brahman perfectly, you have known very little of the Truth, which dwells in you as well as in the universe. Because Truth is one. When you begin to think that you have known the Truth, you are using your secondary knowledge of the intellect, which cannot reveal the Absolute. If you imagine that you have known the Self or Brahman, who is the director of the mind, you have comprehended very little of it. If you think that you have realized it as dwelling

in your body, you have not understood its absolute nature. If you believe that you have cognized it as dwelling outside your body, still you have not realized the Truth. If you have known the Self as God, the Creator of the universe, you have apprehended very litle of it.

Here the question arises: 'Why is it that we have known very little of the Self, if we have known it as dwelling in our body?' Because, that something, which is the director of the mind, does not dwell in one place ; it is beyond the space relation. Therefore, when we have known it as dwelling in a particular place and not anywhere else, we have not realized the Truth. Again, if we have perceived it as dwelling outside of us and not in us, then also we have not known that this Being is all-pervading and beyond the relation of time and space ; but we have known only that much of the Infinite, which is limited by time and space, and conditioned by their relations.

Then the disciple sat in meditation once more, and his soul, rising above the plane of thoughts, entered into the superconscious state. Having remained there for some time, he came back to the plane of sense-consciousness and declared: 'I do not think I know the Self well, nor do I know that I do not know it at all. The Self is neither to be known nor is it the same as that which is absolutely unknown ; he who has known this truth, has realized it (the absolute Brahman).'[90] What he meant by this was that Self-knowledge is beyond relative knowledge and ignorance. Whatever we know by the understanding, is only possible through the light of intelligence, which proceeds from the true Self ; there is no other knower of the Self, who is the illuminator of mind and thoughts. The Self is, in reality, the eternal knower, and there is nothing in the universe that can know the true Self, yet it is the source of all the true knowledge that we possess. It is always the subject of knowledge or consciousness, but never its object. Furthermore, the disciple said: 'He who thinks that the Self (Brahman), can never become an object of knowledge thinks rightly ; but he who thinks, 'I have known it', has not realized its true nature. The Self (Brahman) is not known by those who think it is known ; but it is realized by those who think it is not known.'[91]

This seems an enigma; what does it mean? If we analyse our perceptions, what do we find? When we see a colour, we find that the sensation of colour is produced by light, which is a certain kind of vibration of the ether. A ray of light, coming in contact with the retinæ, causes some kind of molecular change in them, and this being carried by the optic nerves into the brain cells creates certain molecular vibration in those cells. It requires a conscious ego to translate this vibration into a sensation, which we perceive, and call colour. If the conscious ego be not there, then these vibrations may be carried to the brain centres, where they may produce other changes, but, still we shall not see the colour. For instance, when we are looking at a colour, if our mind be suddenly distracted or concentrated on some other object, the colour may remain before our eyes, yet we do not see it. Although the vibration of light has been carried to the brain centres, the molecular changes have been formed, and all the physiological conditions are fulfilled, still we have no sensation of colour, because, there is no one to translate the moleculâr vibrations of the brain cells into the sensation of colour. The ego who translates them, is concentrated on something else. But, when the changes are translated by the ego into sensations, we perceive it.

Now let us go a little deeper. Behind this intellectual perception, there is the self-consciousness of the ego. If the ego be unconscious and, if there be no sense of 'I', these vibrations will come through the senses and pass away, without producing any sensation in the mind. Again, if the mind be separated from the source of apperception and intelligence, the sensations will remain in the subconscious mind, without affecting the conscious ego. This source of consciousness in us is the knower. It is our true Self.

We know that we are sitting here; when we walk, we know that we are walking; when we perform an act, we know that we are performing it; this knower of all acts and thoughts is the director. Is that knowledge different from our true Self? No, it is inseparable from our Self. Our true Self is like a sea of intelligence. Some people say that knowledge proceeds from the Self, or in other words, that from which this knowledge proceeds, is the Self. This would imply that the Self is separate from knowledge and would raise the question: 'What is,

then, the nature of the true Self ?' According to monistic Vedanta, the true nature of the Self or *Atman* or Brahman is absolute knowledge or absolute intelligence, which never changes. The functions of the intellect and mind are changeable, but Self-knowledge is unchangeable. Suppose you have a feeling, when it rises, you feel it and know that there is that feeling. When it subsides and another takes its place, then also you know that the new feeling is there. The knowledge, by which you cognize each feeling, cannot be known by any other knowledge, for there is only one knowledge in the universe ; consquently, the knower of that knowledge cannot be known by any other knowledge. That, by which you know the existence of a feeling or a sensation, cannot be revealed by intellect, understanding, or any other faculty. Upon it depends intellectual understanding. Whenever we perceive any object through the senses, that knowledge is a partial expression of the Self or absolute knowledge, which directs the mind and senses to perform their functions.

The nature of the Self is all-knowing. Its knowledge does not depend upon the relation between the knower and the object of knowledge (*jnata* and *jneya*), but it remains unchanged even, when all the objects of knowledge have ceased to exist. The all-knowing Self may be compared to the self-effulgent sun. As the nature of the sun is to illumine himself as well as other objects, so the light of the Self illumines its own nature, as also the phenomenal world. The sun himself can illumine everything as well as his own form. We do not need a candle or a torch to see him ; therefore, we call him self-effulgent. Self-effulgence (*svayamjyoti*) does not need any other light to illumine its nature. For the same reason, the *Atman* is said to be the self-effulgent sun of knowledge. That knowledge, by which we perceive all sensations and feelings, organic functions, intellection, understanding, and other activities of the mind as well as external objects, the sun, moon, stars, is the light of the self-effulgent *Atman* or Self, which is the source of intelligence and consciousness.

This self-effulgent *Atman* is the knower and director of the mind and senses. The mind and senses will not perform any function, if they are separated from the self-effulgent light of knowledge. Mind, as we have already seen, is 'finer matter

in vibration'. Vedanta does not teach that mind is the same as the Self or Spirit. There is no intelligence in the vibration of the mind substance. It is not the source of consciousness. All the activities of the mind may stop, still we shall remain conscious of our Self. In the state of *samadhi,* there may not be any feeling, like fear, anger, or any other modification of the mind substance, such as, volition, desire, emotion, will, determination, cognition, or understanding, but still one does not lose self-consciousness, or become absolutely unconscious in that state. This will prove that pure consciousness or pure intelligence is separate from and independent of mental functions.

All these functions and sensations can be stopped, by entering into superconsciousness; in short, one can cut off all connection with the body and mind and still continue to be conscious on the higher plane. It will be difficult for those who have not realized in *samadhi* to grasp this truth. Intellectual knowledge will not reveal the Self. We must learn the method of going beyond intellect, and rising above the realm of thoughts, if we wish to realize the absolute Self or *Atman,* we shall be free from the bondage of ignorance. Intellectual apprehension, being relative and imperfect, cannot transcend the limits of phenomena, and cannot reach the sphere of the Absolute. Therefore, it is said: 'He who thinks, he knows the Self, knows it not'.

Self-knowledge precedes even the conception of God. If the thought about God, which is in our mind, be separated from self-consciousness, it instantly vanishes, and becomes non-existent. We know God, because there is knowledge in us, and because the light of the Self reveals the existence of God. If this be so, we ask: which is higher, the personal God or the Self, it must be said that the Self is higher, because it illumines the existence of God. This source of all knowledge, which is the absolute Truth, is higher than a personal God, since the personal God, who can be described by words and thought of, by the mind, becomes subject to mind and speech, consequently, to the Self or *Atman,* which is the director of mind and speech; and that which is subject to a thing, must be lower or less than that which governs it. So, when we try to know our true Self, we do not attempt to know it, as we know the

existence of a book or a tree, because that kind of knowledge will never reveal it. We must not try to see any form, because there is no form in the Self. We must not make the objects of the senses like sound, colour, odour, touch, the starting point of our search after Self. For, these are on the relative plane, while the Self is the absolute Being.

Thus, we can understand the difference between the relative plane and the absolute one. So long as we are on the relative plane, we cannot reach the Absolute, because the Absolute or absolute knowledge, by which we know the existence of things which are related to one another, is beyond all relations. All relative phenomena exist in and through the Absolute, but the absolute *Atman* is independent and self-existent. If we were unintelligent beings and did not possess Self-knowledge, then these sensations and perceptions would have no relation to us. The pure knowledge of the absolute Self may be compared to the thread, which goes through the pearls of percepts, ideas, and thoughts that rise in our minds, and strings them together into one harmonious whole, forming a garland of our daily experiences. This pure knowledge must not be confounded with the relative knowledge which is finite and related to ignorance, or non-knowledge. The Self, being the knower of ignorance, is higher and greater and its light of absolute knowledge is that, by which we realize that we know this or do not know that.

In Vedanta it is said: "The Self is the knower of that which sees, hears, thinks, or perceives. It is the knower of the body, senses, mind, intellect, and heart with which we identify our Self'. Through this identification, when the Self appears as the ego, we say that we are the hearer, seer, perceiver, and thinker; but the ego sees, hears, thinks, and perceives, being dependent upon the pure knowledge of the Self. In fact, the ego cannot exist without Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge and existence are one and the same. We know that we are here; if for a moment we forget that we are in this place, or, if we become unconscious of our surroundings, we shall remain non-existent, as it were, in relation to our environments. Thus, although we may try to separate our Self-knowledge from our existence, we can never do it, for pure knowledge or consciousness and existence are inseparable.

When we have realized Self-knowledge, we have understood our existence, and discovered that the director of the mind is all-knowledge and all-existence. We say that the sun exists, because we are conscious of him. When we are not conscious of the Self, as in trance, it does not exist in relation to us. Self-consciousness is, therefore, the standard of all relative knowledge and relative existence. Herein lies the beginning and the end of the existence of all objects, which we can think of, or perceive. The moment that we are unconscious of our body and everything of this world, they will cease to exist in relation to us. We all experience this truth during our sound sleep, when our conscious connection with the body being cut off, it ceases to exist, and, consequently, we do not claim anything of the material world as belonging to us. But, as our consciousness returns to the body, instantly the body together with everything related to it, appears as belonging to us. Therefore, it is said that knowledge and existence are one.

Vedanta gives these two attributes to the absolute Self, who is the director of the mind. The first is absolute existence, in Sanskrit *sat;* and the second is absolute knowledge or intelligence, *chit,* in Sanskrit. These two, as we have already seen, are one and inseparable. A third attribute, however, is also given by Vedanta. It is called in Sanskrit *ananda,* meaning pure happiness or blissfulness. Where absolute knowledge and absolute existence prevail, there is also absolute happiness or blissfulness. It is different from changeable pleasure or relative happiness. Unchangeable blissfulness again is always attended with absolute peace. Wherever there is true happiness, there must be absolute peace, and the mind will not seek anything else, but will enjoy it and will try to possess it and never be separated from it. The ordinary pleasures which we mistake for true happiness, may be agreeable for the time being, but, in the next moment, we dislike them and try to get away from them. Think how transitory are the pleasures that can be derived through the senses. They last only for a short time and in the reaction make us miserable. True happiness, however, is unchangeable. It brings no reaction and is everlasting. In the state of absolute existence and pure knowledge alone, can be found absolute peace and

true happiness. Such is the realm of our true Self, which is above all relativity and beyond all conditions of this earth. This indivisible *sat-chit-ananda,* absolute existence-intelligence-bliss, the disciple realized in *samadhi,* as the director of the mind and the source of all the phenomena of the universe.

He then said: 'Whosoever realizes that which manifests within us as the conscious Self, attains to immortality'.[92] Death means a change of the body. The body may die, the mind may die, the senses may die, but pure knowledge can never die. When we know that something is dying, and, if we do not identify ourselves with it, but become conscious of our absolute Self, then we are sure to attain to immortality. If we once grasp the idea that we are the absolute Being, how can we ever be changed by death into a non-being? As being cannot come out of non-being, so it cannot go back to non-being. Pure existence can never become non-existence, and this is the proof of immortality. The absolute Self or *Atman* is the immortal Being. It is also Brahman, the beginning and the end of the universe. The same eternal Being is worshipped as God, under various names and forms. He is the Being who dwells in us and is inseparable from our true Self. The absolute Being is not many but one. If there were many absolute Beings, they would be limited by each other, and, consequently, not absolute. That one absolute Being alone is immortal and deathless, and by knowing it, we become immortal. No divine incarnation can give us immortality, if we do not possess it already. The Christian belief that immortality can be obtained only through the grace of Jesus the Christ, is not founded upon the knowledge of the immortal nature of our true Self. The students of Vedanta are not deluded by such statements; they try first to know the real Self and, then, they realize that immortality, which is their birthright.

Since the true Self is the source of all strength, the disciple said: 'We gain strength and immortality by Self-knowledge.' Real strength comes to us, when we have known that which is changeless and immortal. The spiritual strength, which is gained through Self-knowledge, is greater than material, physical, mental, and moral strength together. All other powers,

except spiritual strength, are subject to change and death. Few people understand the meaning of 'spiritual strength.' By the word 'spirit' is not meant a disembodied spirit, but the absolute Spirit or Self or *Atman* or Brahman. Spirit is that Self, which is the source of absolute intelligence, and which is the absolute Being. Knowing it, one attains to spiritual strength, which is higher than physical or psychic strength. With physical strength a man can kill a tiger or destroy thousands of mortals, but it will not protect him from death. He may possess material strength, but it will not save his life at the last moment. He may gain psychic power and do wonderful things, but that will not stop the changes of body and mind. Spiritual strength, however, which Self-knowledge brings, makes one free from birth and death. He who has gained physical and phychic powers, will remain subject to birth and death, but, if he can know that immortal Being, he becomes master of the universe. The gigantic forces of nature serve and obey the command of him, who has acquired Self-knowledge. 'If a man knows this Self here, he has gained the Truth'.[93] In this world of imperfection he, who has known the Self, has realized the absolute Truth and has fulfilled the highest purpose of life. He has attained absolute freedom, perfect peace and true happiness in this life. But 'if he do not know this here, for him there is great suffering'.[94] He who does not realize the Self, comes back to this earth again and again, and, remaining in ignorance, seeks sense-pleasures and suffers great sorrow and misery. He does not escape the law of karma and reincarnation.

'The wise ones, who have realized the all-pervading absolute Self (Brahman) in all animate and inanimate objects, become immortal after departing from this world'.[95] The knower of the absolute and immortal Self becomes one with it and remains as the immortal and perfect Spirit for ever and ever.

IMMORTALITY AND THE SELF

That which is the Infinite, is Bliss. In the finite there is no bliss. Infinity alone is bliss. This Infinity is to be realized.

The Self (Atman) is the Infinite. Self is below, above behind, before, right and left; Self is all this.

He who sees, perceives, understands, and loves the Self, delights in the Self, reveals in the Self, rejoices in the Self, becomes the lord and master in all the world'.[96]

CHAPTER VI

IMMORTALITY AND THE SELF

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* of the Yajur-Veda we read that there lived in ancient India a great sage, Yajnavalkya, by name. He was a seer of Truth, and lived a pure, virtuous, and righteous life. He had a devoted wife, whose name was Maitreyi. He performed all the duties of the householder, as also of a good citizen, and lived in peace, doing good to others. As the result of all these good and unselfish works, his heart was purified, and his eyes were open to spiritual Truth. He undersood the transitoriness and impermanent nature of the phenomenal world, and realizing that the life of a householder was only a grade in the process of evolution, he desired to enter into a higher state, and make further progress. He had discovered the foolishness of people who lead a worldly life and constantly try to fulfil their earthly desires, and, therefore, he made up his mind to live a life of seclusion, and devote the rest of his days to the pursuit of eternal Truth. He wished to take refuge in the absolute Reality of the universe, by retiring, as was customary, into the forest, where he would not be disturbed by the world. Constant meditation upon the true Self had become the aim of this great seer.

One day he came to his wife and said: "Beloved Maitreyi, verily I wish to retire into the forest, leaving with thee my wealth, property, and whatever belongs to me. Enjoy these and grant me thy permission."[97] On hearing this, Maitreyi felt extremely unhappy, but being spiritually-minded, she asked this question: "Bhagavan, please tell me, if I possess the whole earth with all the wealth it contains, shall I gain immortality by it?"[98] She was not like the wives of today, who are greedy for wealth and possessions, and who are delighted to acquire a little inheritance. She was not ambitious for material property like a woman of the world, but she understood that immortality was the highest of all treasures. Being guided by this idea, she questioned: "Shall I be immortal by possessing all the riches

and property which thou art going to give me?" "No", replied the sage, "if thou possessest the property and wealth of the world thou wilt live like the rich who enjoy, in whatever manner they desire, the luxuries, comforts, and pleasures of earthly existence. There is no hope of gaining immortality by wealth. None can ever become immortal by means of riches or material possessions."[99] Then, the wife said: "What shall I do with that thing which cannot bring me immortality? If thou hast anything by which I shall become immortal, please give me that. I do not care for thy wealth."[100] Her husband, the great sage, replied: "Thou art truly my beloved; thou hast spoken well, it is worthy of thee. If thou desirest, I will tell thee of that by which one can attain immortality. Come and listen attentively to what I will say."[101]

He first explained the true nature of the object of love. People love their parents, children, husbands, wives, property, wealth, and all other things that they possess, but they do not know what they love in reality. The real object of love is not a material thing, but that which lies behind the material form. "O beloved, verily I say unto thee: a wife loves her husband not for the husband's sake, but it is for the sake of the *Atman*, the Self, who is within, that the husband is loved ."[102] The wife does not love the dead particles of matter which make up the body of her husband, but she loves the soul, the *Atman*, which lies behind his form. "The husband loves his wife not for the wife's sake, but it is for the sake of the *Atman*, the Self, who is within, that the wife is loved."[103] The physical body of the wife is not dear to her husband but her soul, the *Atman*, is dear to him. The husband will not touch the dead body of his wife, he will not love it, when her soul has departed from it. 'People love their children, not for the children's sake, not for the material form of their children, but it is for the sake of the *Atman*, the Self, that the children are loved.'[104] When a mother loves her child, do you think that she loves the matter that makes up the face or the body of the child? No, it is the Self that, dwelling behind the material particles, gives the child its form and attracts the soul of the mother. Love cannot exist on the material plane; it is the attraction between two souls on the spiritual plane of the Self. When people love their friends

and relatives, that attraction of the souls lies at the bottom of the expression of their true love.

"Verily wealth is not dear, O beloved, that thou mayst love wealth, but that thou mayst love *Atman*, the Self, therefore wealth is dear."[105] The centre of love is the *Atman* or Self. When we love wealth or property, our attraction is toward the omnipresent Self, whether we are conscious of it or not. We love animals, like dogs, horses, birds, not because of their material forms, but for the *Atman*, the Self, which resides within them. In this manner, Yajnavalkya showed that wherever there is true love, there is the expression of the real Self or *Atman*. "None, O beloved, loves an animal for the animal's sake, but for the sake of the soul of the animal."[106] The dead material body of an animal cannot inspire love in our souls. 'People love the priests (*Brahmins*), the warriors (*Kshatriyas*), the celestial worlds (*lokas*), the bright spirits (*devas*), the Scriptures (*Vedas*), and all other animate and inanimate objects, not for the sake of those objects, but it is for the sake of the Self (*Atman*) that each of these is loved.'[107]

When a person loves another for the sake of his own lower self or ego, it is an extremely selfish love; but when that love is directed toward the Self or *Atman* which dwells in another person, it is no longer selfish; it gradually leads to divine love. In everything abides the one Self or unchangeable spirit which attracts our souls. We do not know the nature of that Self or *Atman* toward which all love, whether selfish or unselfish, is directed, and from which all love proceeds, whether for wealth, property, or material objects. A miser loves riches, but he knows perfectly well that riches mean nothing but a medium of exchange, that they only bring certain pleasures and comforts of the body. He is attached to his lower self, and for that reason he loves wealth which enriches his ego. The lower self of such a man is the centre of attraction, and everything that brings happiness to it is very dear to him. "Therefore, O Maitreyi, the Self (*Atman*) is to be realized, to be heard, to be thought of, to be meditated upon. O beloved! when the Self has been heard, thought of, meditated upon, and realized. then all is known."[108] Thou shouldst know the true nature of that Self, which is the centre of all attraction, from which all love proceeds and toward

which it is directed. It should be heard and meditated upon constantly; when the mind is concentrated upon it, its true nature will be revealed. By the realization of the true Self, through constant hearing, concentration, and meditation, Self-knowledge and immortality will be gained.

Yajnavalkya continued thus: "If a person loves and cares for another only—for his material body and possessions, the lover is abandoned by the loved one. If we care not for the self of another, but love the dead matter, believing, there is no soul in the person, do you think, that person will be pleased? No, that person will desert us instantly. If we love a priest (*Brahmin*), knowing that there is no Self in him, we shall be abandoned by him. He will immediately leave our company. If we go to a king, thinking that there is no Self in him, that he is only a mass of dead matter, we shall not be loved by him, but, on the contrary, we shall surely be forsaken by him. He will drive us out, if he realizes that we love him not for himself, but for his material possessions. "For the same reason, he who knows there is no Self in the heavens, in the gods (*devas*), in the Scriptures (*Vedas*), in animate and inanimate objects, shall be abandoned by each one of these."[109] If we think of a departed friend, believing, there is no soul in him, we shall surely be deserted by him. If we love God, knowing Him as a mass of insentient matter, without loving His spiritual, divine and immortal Self or *Atman*, He will never come to us; we shall be forsaken by Him. Thus, we can understand that whosoever knows anything elsewhere than in the true Self or *Atman*, is and should be abandoned by everything, because everything exists as related to the Self. 'The Self is all, and all is the Self.' Whatever we see, perceive, or think of, is inseparably connected with the Self (*Atman*), it is one with the Self, and is, in reality, nothing but the Self.

Here it may be asked as to how is it possible for us to realize that everything is the Self? To explain this Yajnavalkya gives the following illustrations: "Now as the sound of a drum, when beaten with a stick, can be differentiated from other sounds by referring it to the drum or to the drum-stick, which is the source of the sound, and not by any other means, so the existence of a particular object can be differentiated by referring it to the Self (*Atman*), which is the source of all knowledge and

consciousness and without which nothing can be known."[110] "As the sound of a conch-shell or a pipe, when blown, cannot be differentiated without referring it to the shell or to the pipe, as the sounds of a lute, when played, can be known only by referring them to the lute; as these particular sounds are but various manifestations of one common sound, so the one common Self or *Atman*, which is the Reality of the universe, appears through the varieties of names and forms, which we perceive with our senses."[111] "As from the one source of fire, when kindled with damp fuel, gradually emanate clouds of smoke and flame which did not exist there before, so verily, O beloved, from the one great Being, the Self (Brahman), the common source of knowledge and intelligence, has been spontaneously breathed forth all the knowledge that we possess, such as, the four *Vedas* (scriptures), the various branches of science and philosophy, and everything that exists in this world as well as in celestial realms."[112]

Ordinarily, we ascribe scientific knowledge to particular individuals, but, in reality, every kind of knowledge, that we find in different people, scientists, Yogis, and philosophers, has proceeded from that one source, the Self. As from one fire proceed smoke, sparks, and flames, so, from this one infinite Self have come out all the sciences, philosophies, and spiritual truths, described in the different scriptures of the world, as also the truths of art and history. The knowledge, which we possess and make use of in our daily life, is the expression of that absolute knowledge which is eternal, one, indestructible, and unchangeable, and which brings immortality to the knower, who realizes the Self.

At the beginning of the cosmic evolution, all phenomena as well as knowledge evolved from this one infinite Self or Brahman. Just as a human being naturally breathes out the air that has entered his lungs, so the latent energy of the Brahman spontaneously breathed out knowledge and all phenomena which had potentially existed in it before the evolution of the universe. Again, at the time of dissolution, these return to that infinite Being and remain latent as the energy of Brahman, in the same manner as rivers, streamlets, brooks, and all waters that exist anywhere will eventually flow into one ocean. The ocean of the infinite Brahman is the final goal as

well as the source of all-knowledge and phenomena of the world. "As the source of all taste is in the tongue, of all touch in the skin, of all smells in the nose, of all colours in the eye, of all sounds in the ear, of all percepts in the mind, of all knowledge in the intelligence, so the source of all intelligence is the Self or *Atman* or Brahman."[113]

Thus Yajnavalkya explained to his wife as to how the infinite Self is the beginning and the end as well as the Alpha and Omega of everything. At the time of evolution, everything comes out of it, and, during involution or dissolution, everything goes back to the same source of all. The infinite Self, *Atman* or Brahman, is one mass of intelligence without a second; there is no duality or multiplicity in this one substance. "As a lump of salt has neither outside nor inside, but it is a mass of taste, so, indeed, the absolute Self has neither outside nor inside, but it is altogether a mass of intelligence, unlimited, beginningless, and endless."[114]

This infinite Being appears in two aspects, the universal, which is called Brahman, and the individual, which is called the Self or *Atman*. As the source of individual consciousness, it manifests itself in various forms, when it is connected with our body and senses, but, when it leaves this material body, the senses cease to perceive their objects, and the elements return to their causal states from which they arose. After death one cannot perceive the objects of senses. "O beloved! verily I say unto thee, although the Self is a mass of intelligence having departed from the body, it possesses no particular consciousness of a mortal."[115] The expression of intelligence on the sense plane stops after death.

On hearing this, Maitreyi replied: "O wise lord! thou hast bewildered me by thy statement, "this mass of intelligence possesses no particular consciousness after death." How can it be? Jajnavalkya answered: "O beloved! I do not say anything bewildering; imperishable is the nature of the Self (*Atman*)."[116] For thy enlightenment I will explain it to thee. "The Self is deathless and immortal by nature. So long as there is the duality of the perceiver and the object of perception, one sees, perceives the other, one smells the other, one tastes, touches, thinks, and knows the other."[117] The individual self perceives sense objects so long as it remains on the plane

of duality or relativity. The perception of sight is possible, only when the seer is related to an object of vision. If we are not related to that which we call odour how can we smell it? The ego can hear a sound or taste a savour, by coming in direct relation with those objects of sensation. In this manner, it can be shown that all perception and sensation require the reltaion between the subject and object. But when we go into deep sleep (*sushupti*), we do not see, hear, taste, smell, or perceive anything. These objects exist on the sense plane, but, when we are above and beyond it and have gone to that plane, where there is neither sight nor odour nor smell nor taste, how can we see, hear, or perceive anything? All individual souls, who are in the state of dreamless sleep, become equal in their realization; we cannot distinguish the soul of a man from that of a woman, so long as he or she is in sound sleep; then it is impossible to differentiate them. Similarly, in the state of *samadhi* or superconsciousness, where there is neither duality nor multiplicity, but simply the infinite ocean of intelligence, what can be seen or heard or smelled or tasted? Where there is neither relativity nor any object of perception, how can one touch or know or think of anything? 'How can one know that by which one knows all this?' Is there any power of knowledge, by which we can know the Self, who is the knower of all? No, because the true Self alone is the Knower (*jnata*) of the universe.

If we seek to know the Self within us, what will be the best method? By right discrimination and analysis we can differentiate the knower from the object of knowledge. In this process of dicrimination, we must mentally reject everything outside of the knower by saying: 'not this, not this'—*neti neti*. Thus, when all objects of knowledge, including all sensations, perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and other mental and intellectual functions are removed by right discrimination, the all-knowing Self is realized in *samadhi*. The Self or Knower cannot be comprehended by intellect; it is incomprehensible. The Self cannot be perished; it is immortal. The Self cannot be destroyed by anything; it is unchangeable. The Self is unattached; it is not touched by any object. The Self is unfettered; it is free. It does not suffer; it is beyond all suffering. It does not fail; it is always the same. "How, O beloved, can such a Knower be

known and by whom? Thus far, O Maitreyi, the true nature of the Self can be described; and beyond this is the realization in *samadhi* (superconsciousness) which brings the attainment of immortality. He, who has realized the Self, has become immortal. The knowledge of that Self, which is the source of all love, the source of intelligence, existence, and all that is blissful, makes one attain to immortality."[118] Thus saying, Yajnavalkya, the great seer of Truth, retired into the forest, devoted his time to meditating upon that eternal Self, and, ultimately, realizing his true nature in *samadhi*, gained immortal life.

Self-knowledge being the goal of life, by that alone we can understand the universe, how it has come into existence, why it stands, and where it will go after dissolution. By knowing our true Self, we can know what will become of all phenomena at the time of general involution, and, if we wish to become immortal, we must know this Self or *Atman*; there is no other way to immortlity.

"I know this great *Atman*, radiant like the self-effulgent sun and beyond the darkness of ignorance. By knowing Him alone one crosses the ocean of death; there is no other way; there is no other way."[119]

APPENDIX

1. *Kaushitaki,* p. 3.8.
2. *Mandukya-Karika,* 1.31; *Taittiriya Upanishad,* 3.4, *Yoga-vashistha,* III, 103.14; V, 49.40.
3. Herbert Spencer: First Principles, p. 140.
4. *Mundaka-Upanishad,* 1.2.3.
5. The whole universe is like a gigantic magnet, and the law of potentiality produces mind and matter from the same thing. There is one substance in the universe which is neither mind nor matter. By that potentiality we must understand, that mind and matter, subject and object, emanate from the same substance. The one pole of the magnet is positive, which is mind; the other is negative, which is matter. The positive pole is the subject; the negative pole is the object; but they both exist in the same substance. Therefore where there is mind there is matter. This mind is the invisible side of matter and matter is the visible side of mind. This law of potentiality says that they are contrasted. What we can posit on the one pole we cannot posit on the other; they must be diametrically opposed. So the potentiality is the essence of rhythm, of action and reaction, surging and receding of the tide. This process is going on eternally as evolution and involution. Standing by the ocean you will see the water rushes against the shore and goes back, and again it returns. We call it the law of Karma or evolution and involution. * * This is the universe.

   If matter is unconscious, mind must be conscious, because it is the other pole. In one pole it is consciousness; in the other pole it is unconsciousness. In one pole there is feeling; in the other there is no feeling. So, that will explain how this universe is built up. Individual can find God the Absolute in the ego, which is potentially the Whole in quality and a part in quantity. We are Whole (*purna*) in quality. We have the seed in us of omnipresence, omnipotence and omniscience. In quantity we are parts, but in quality we have the same quality as Godhood, and therefore we can know God, because we are potentially God. The potentiality of the Whole is there and therefore we can realize the Whole. If that were not there from the beginning, we could not realize it. That explains unity in variety, and it also explains the relation between monism and dualism. That is monism when we look at the neutral point of the magnet; then we do not see the positive end and the negative end. But dualism would admit the positive end and the negative end and does not pay any attention to the neutral point.
6. *Bhagavad Gita,* II, 23.
7. ,, II, 27.
8. ,, XV, 7.
9. ,, XIV, 3.
10. *Taittiriya Upanishad,* 3.1.
11. *Katha-Upanishad,* 2.2.23; *Shvetasvastara Upanishad,* 6.13.
12. A Hymn to Peace of the *Upanishads, Isha* and *Brihadaranyaka.*
13. *Isha-Upanishad,* 1.4.
14. Swami Abhedananda: *Doctrine of Karma,* p. 53, and *Path of Realization,* p. 14.
15. *Isha-Upanishad,* 1.5.

16. *Isha-Upanishad,* 1.6.
17. ,, 1.7.
18. ,, 1.8.
19. ,, 1.3.
20. ,, 1.13 and *Mundaka-Upanishad,* 2.19.
21. A hymn to Peace of the *Kaushitaki-Upanishad.*
22-51. *Kaushitaki-Upanishad,* 1.3, 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, 7.3, 8.3.
52. A hymn to Peace of the *Chhandogya-Upanishad.*
53. *Chhandogya-Upanishad,* 1.7.1.
54. When a verse or Rik is sung by notes it is called Saman or Samagana.
55-56. *Chhandogya-Upanishad,* 1.7.2-3.
57. ,, 1.7.4.
58. ,, 1.7.4.
59. ,, 8.8.1.
60-63. ,, 8.8 2-3.
64-65. ,, 8.9.1-3.
66-67. ,, 8.10.1-2.
68. ,, 8.10.3-4.
69-70. ,, 8.11.1-3.
71. ,, 8.12.1.
72. ,, 8.12.2-3.
73. ,, 8.12.4.
74. ,, 8.12.5.
75. ,, 8.12.6.
76. A hymn to Peace of the *Kena-Upanishad.*
77. *Kena-Upanishad,* 1.1
78. ,, 1.2.
79. ,, 1.2
80. ,, 1.3.
81. ,, 1.3.
82. ,, 1.4
83. ,, 1.4
84. ,, 1.5.
85. ,, 1.6.
86. ,, 1.7.
87. ,, 1.8.
88. ,, 2.1.
89. ,, 2.2.
90. ,, 2.3.
91. ,, 2.4.
92. ,, 2.5.
93. ,, 2.5.
94. ,, 2.5.
95. *Chhandogya-Upanishad,* 7.23.1 ; 7.25.2.
96-118. *Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad,* 4.5 ; 1 15.
119. *Shvetasvatara-Upanishad,* 3.8.

REINCARNATION

PREFACE

This book contains illuminating lectures on reincarnation, transmigration, resurrection, evolution, heredity, etc. The great mystic philosopher, Swami Abhedananda has raised various critical problems and has given satisfactory rational and scientific solution of them. His mode of treatment is very fascinating and logical and the language is lucid. The thought and ideas underlying and impregnated in them are very deep and penetrating. He maintains throughout all his lectures the Vedantic non-dualistic viewpoint and the great Indian spirit. He says that the visible phenomena of the universe are bound by the universal law of cause and sequence. The effect is visible and perceptible, while the cause is invisible and imperceptible. Everything gross is the outcome of a subtle cause. There is *something* behind this gigantic manifold universe and it was not created out of nothing. The Swami upholds the *satkaryavad* of Samkhya, Mimansa and Vedanta. He believes in a unifying ground or substratum of the walking shadows of the world and that ground or substratum is the Brahman, which is all-intelligence and all-bliss.

Swami Abhedananda says that the subtle and sleeping *samskaras* or impressions are the makers and moulders of man's character and destiny. The subconscious level of the mind is the storehouse of energized *samskaras.* Man is an instrument in the hand of his *samskaras,* but he can get control over them by creating counter-*samskaras* just as habits are overcome by counter-habits. Man always creates his future by reaping the conesquences of the present, and in the process he is entangled in the cycle of birth and death. The Hindus believe in the theory of reincarnation. They know that spirit or *Atman* is deathless and immortal; it takes the body as its garment to work for his salvation and to reap the results of his past action in the phenomenal world. The soul or *jivatman* passes through the grades of gradual progress and reaches at last the ultimate goal and attains to perfection.

All the lectures of the Swami reflect the lusture of his profoundity of knowledge and depth of learning. Especially

the last lecture, that on *Theory of Transmigration,* is as unique as it is gorgeously illuminating. In it the learned Swami exhibits his own original views taking a bold stand on the rock of logical arguments. He accepted the modern science and its truth-seeking method, and rejects strongly the rigid and materialistic theories of the modern scientists, agnostics and direct realists, who advocate the theory of heredity and endeavour to explain everything by it. He refutes the peculiar views of the Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and Parsees about the theory of transmigration. Transmigration or metempsychosis is believed by many philosophers as the passing of a soul from one body after death into another. This belief is found even in Pythagoras, Plato and their followers. Plato described in mythological language in *Phœdrus* how the human souls go out of the dead bodies and take new ones for getting newer experiences. Again the Platonic idea of transmigration admits the successive lives after death. According to this theory, the souls are allowed to choose their lots in accordance with their experience or bent of character, and are unaffected by the natural consequences of their good and bad deeds. Plato himself believed that souls generally choose the bodies of lower animals. But the Hindu view of transmigration is different from it. Buddhist rebirth theory also differs from the Hindu one, because the Buddhists do not believe in the permanence of the soul entity, whereas the Hindus believe that soul is permanent while the body is impermanent. Swami Abhedananda shows the difference between the Hindu or Vedantic theory of reincarnation and the Platonic theory of transmigration. He says that according to Hindu or Vedantic theory the soul or germ of life passes through the lower stages and comes at last to higher human plane and after coming to the higher plane, it does not retrograde into lower animal bodies. The Platonic theory is opposed to it, because it teaches that human souls do pass into different animal bodies. It is true, the Swami mentions, that although "there are passages in the scriptural writings of the Hindus which *apparently* refer to the retrogression of the human soul into animal nature, still *such passages do not necessarily mean that the souls will be obliged to take animal bodies. They may have to live like animals even when they have human bodies,* as we may find among us many people like cats and

dogs and snakes in human form and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs and snakes. They are reaping their own Karma and manifesting their *animal nature,* though physically they look like human beings". Swami Vivekananda used to uphold the view of the traditional Hindu scriptures, but Swami Abhedananda took a very rational, scientific and most realistic meaning and view. Here lies the difference between Swami Vivekananda and Swami Abhedananda in their respective views. Mr. Tylor, Prof. Seth Pringle-Pattison. Dr. Radhakrishnan and others hold the same view as Swami Abhedananda maintains. Like the Swami, Dr. Radhakrishnan says in his *Idealist Views of Life* (1937, p. 292): "It is possible for man to degenerate into a savage being but he is still a man. It is possible that rebirth in animal form is a figure of speech for rebirth with animal qualities." Swami Abhedananda gives a strong and reasonable argument in support of his view that we "have already passed in the evolutionary process through the lower grade of animal organisms. Now that we have outgrown them, why should we go back to them?" However, in the opinion of Swami Abhedananda reincarnation of the soul is the process of the fulfilment of ultimate purpose of earthly life ; it is a means to an end ; it is a marching towards the prime human goal which is the attainment of Godconsciousness.

II

Swami Abhedananda delivered lectures on *Reincarnation* many times before the learned audiences of the West. The Journal *Brahmavadin* (Vol. III, April, 1898, No. 14, p. 567) says: "Some of the best lectures, as that on 'Reincarnation' for instance, have even been given three times and a fourth time has been requested." The Swami's first lecture on *Reincarnation* was given on 13th February, 1898 in New York, as we find in his *Leaves from My Diary*: "On February 13th, 3 P.M. on Reincarnation (repeated by request)." The second time he lectured on the same subject and it was Sunday the 13th March, 1898, at 3 P.M. The subject of the lecture was *Evolution and Reincarnation.* The Swami thus mentions it in his *Leaves from My Diary*: "On Sunday afternoon March 13th, at 3 P.M. I delivered lecture on *Evolution and Reincarnation* (which was

published afterwards) before an audience of about 200. The lecture was highly appreciated by all who were present in the hall."

Again the Swami mentions in his *Leaves from My Diary*: "On Sunday, February 5th at 3 P.M. (1899) I gave a public lecture on *Which is scientific—Resurrection or Reincarnation*? The audience numbered about 100." On March 15th 1899, he delivered a lecture again on *Evolution and Reincarnation* by request. The Swami thus writes in his *Leaves from My Diary*: "On March 15th at 8 P.M., it rained hard throughout the day. I gave a public lecture on *Evolution and Reincarnation* (repeated by request) for an hour and a half in Assembly Hall. Prof. Jackson of Columbia University came to the lecture and became deeply interested in the subject. The audience numbered about 100." "On March 28th (1899)," the Swami writes again, "it rained hard all day long. In the afternoon I went to see Mrs. Coulston at Mr. Leggett's. Mr. Vanderbilt brought to me the proofs of *Reincarnation*. He had volunteered to have printed 2000 copies at his own cost and presented them to me. This was the beginning of my printed works. The proceeds from the sale of *Reincarnation* which at first contained three lectures. . . . (1) *What is Reincarnation*, (2) *Which is Scientific—Resurrection or Reincarnation*, (3) *Evolutin and Reincarnation*, were kept separate and spent in printing other lectures and pamphlets. Mr. Vanderbilt told me that these lectures were so good and convincing that he wished every body ought to read them. He deserves my hearty thanks for publishing my lectures on *Reincarnation* under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of New York City."

A lecture on *Reincarnation* was again delivered by Swami Abhedananda on 17th April 1899, in Day Building, Room 19 in which audiences were over 130 in number. *The Worcester Spy* (New York) of April 18th, 1899 says: "The Swami Abhedananda lectured again last night before a large audience in L'arien Hall, 206 Main Street.—The subject last night was *The Vital-Force and Reincarnation*."

S. PRAJNANANANDA

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

REINCARNATION:

Cause and effect,—Gross and subtle bodies,—What do we mean by a subtle body,—*Samskaras* or *Vasana*,—Voluntary or involuntary action,—Desires, will and thought,—Selection of common environments,—Natural selection,—Scientific explanation of reincarnation theory,—Different philosophers on reincarnation,—Transmigration and metempsychosis,—Christianity and reincarnation,—Wordsworth, Tennyson and Whitman about reincarnation,—Judaism and Zoroastrianism and one-birth theory,—Good and evil are relative terms,—Nothing is destroyed in this world,—Nature teaches us the great lesson of rebirth,—Memory and the law of persistence,—Rememberance of previous existence,—The subconscious mind,—What is Chitta,—The dormant impressions,—Some wonderful powers,—Each individual soul possesses the storehouse of previous experiences,—Yogis develop the power of memory,—Nothing remains unknown to man.

CHAPTER II

HEREDITY AND REINCARNATION:

Acceptance of the theory of heredity and denial of existence of the human soul,—Heredity and materialistic scientists,—Hæckel's definition or heridity,—Darwin's theory of Pangenesis,—August Weismann and heredity,—Democritus,—Weismann and the theory of the 'continuity of the germ-plasm',—Germ-cells continue from one generation to another,—Weismann and heredity,—Vedanta and germ-plasms,—Theory of heredity,—The doctrine of reincarnation,—Hereditary transmission,—Cumulative heredity,—The law of karma.

CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION:

Evolution and modern science,—The germ-life,—What science says about the evolution theory,—Man's 'self',—The struggle for existence,—Prof. Huxley and evolution,—Prof. Calderwood and evolution theory,—The theory of natural selection,—Vedanta and evolution,—Modern scientists and the theory of evolution,—Potentiality in the germ of life,—Slumbering mental powers,—The manifestation of latent powers,—M. M. Williams and evolution,—Each germ of life is studying,—Evolution is the process of perfection,—What do we mean by an intellectual perfection,—Higher and lower natures in man,—Theory of reincarnation is a supplement to the theory of evolution,—J. F. Clarke and evolution,—Gita and evolution.

CHAPTER IV

WHICH IS SCIENTIFIC—RESURRECTION OR REINCARNATION:

Old Testament and the idea of resurrection,—Jews and resurrection,—Zoroastrians and resurrection,—Parsees and resurrection,—Modern science and miracles—Reincarnation is based upon evolution,—Reincarnation denies the idea that the soul has come out of nothing,—Theory of reincarnation is logical and satisfactory.

CHAPTER V

THEORY OF TRANSMIGRATION:

Transmigration theory presupposes the existence of soul,—The views of Origin and Church Fathers,—Metempsychosis,—Greek philosophers about transmigration,—Platonic idea of transmigration,—What do we mean by Karma,—Indian and Egyptian ideas transmigration,—What do we mean by 'rebirth',—Platonic theory of the idea of progress,—Retrogression theory,—What do we mean by 'sin'.

CHAPTER I

REINCARNATION

The visible phenomena of the universe are bound by the universal law of cause and effect (*karya* and *karana*). The effect is visible or perceptible, while the cause is invisible or imperceptible. The falling of an apple from a tree is the effect of a certain invisible force called gravitation. Although the force cannot be perceived by the senses, its expression is visible. All perceptible phenomena are but the various expressions of different forces which act as invisible agents upon the subtle and imperceptible forms of matter. These invisible agents or forces together wih the imperceptible particles of matter make up the subtle states of the phenomenal universe. When a subtle force becomes objectified, it appears as a gross object. Therefore, we can say, that every gross form is an expression of some subtle force acting upon the subtle particles of matter. The minute particles of hydrogen and oxygen when combined by chemical force, appear in the gross form of water. Water can never be separated from hydrogen and oxygen, which are its subtle component parts. Its existence depends upon that of its component parts, or in other words, upon its subtle form. If the subtle state changes, the gross manifestation will also change. The peculiarity in the gross form of a plant depends upon the peculiar nature of its subtle form, the seed. The peculiar nature of the gross forms in the animal kingdom depends upon the subtle forms which manifest variously in each of the intermediate stages between the microscopic unit of living matter and the highest man. The gross human body is closely related to its subtle body. Not only this, but every movement or change in the physical form is caused by the activity and change of the subtle body. If the subtle body be affected or changed a little, the gross body will also be affected similarly. The material body being the expression of the subtle body, its birth, growth, decay and death depend upon the changes of the subtle body. As long as the subtle

body remains, it will continue to express itself in a corresponding gross form.

Now let us understand clearly what we mean by a subtle body. It is nothing but a minute germ of a living substance. It contains the invisible particles of matter which are held together by vital force, and it also possesses mind or thought-force in a potential state, just as the seed of a plant contains in it the life force and the power of growth. According to Vedanta, the subtle body consists of *antahkarnam,* that is, the internal organ or the mind substance with its various modifications, mind, intellect, egoism, memory, the five instruments of perception; the powers of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching; the five instruments of action, such as the powers of seizing, moving, speaking, evacuating, and generating, and the five *pranas. Prana* is a Sanskrit word which means vital energy or the life-sustaining power in us. Although *prana* is one, it takes five different names on account of the five different functions it performs. This word *prana* includes the five manifestations of the vital force: First, that power which moves the lungs and draws the atmospheric air from outside into the system. This is also called *prana.* Second, that power which throws out of the system such things as are not wanted. It is called in Sanskrit *apana.* Third, it takes the name of *samana,* as performing digestive functions and carrying the extract of food to every part of the body. It is called *udana* when it is the cause of bringing down food from the mouth through the alimentary canal to the stomach, and aslo when it is the cause of the power of speech. The fifth power of *prana* is that which works in every part of the nervous system from head to foot, through every canal, which keeps the shape of the body, preserves it from putrefaction, and gives health and life to every cell and organ. These are the various manifestations of the vital force or *prana.* These subtle powers together with the non-composite elements of the gross body, or the ethereal particles of subtle matter, and also with the potentialities of all impressions, ideas and tendencies which each individual gathers in one life, make up his subtle body. As a resultant of all the different actions of mind and body which an individual performs in his present life, will be the tendencies and desires in his future life ; nothing will be lost.

Every action of body or mind which we do, every thought which we think, becomes fine, and is stored up in the form of a *samskara* or impression in our mind. It remains latent for and produces new desires. These desires are called in Vedanta, *vasanas*. *Vasanas* or strong desires are the manufacturers of new bodies. If *vasana* or longing for worldly pleasures and objects remains in anybody, even after hundreds of births, that person will be born. Nothing can prevent the course of strong desires. Desires must be fulfilled sooner or later.

Every voluntary or involuntary action of the body, sense or mind must correspond to the dormant impressions stored up in the subtle body. Although growth, the process of nourishment and all the changes of the gross physical body take place according to the necessarily acting causes, yet the whole series of actions, and consequently every individual act, the condition of the body which accomplishes it, nay, the whole process in and through which the body exists, are nothing but the outward expressions of the latent impressions stored up in the subtle body. Upon these rests the perfect suitableness of the animal or human body to the animal or human nature of one's impressions. The organs of the senses must therefore completely correspond to the principal desires which are the strongest and most ready to manifest. They are the visible expressions of these desires. If there be no hunger or desire to eat, teeth, throat and bowels will be of no use. If there be no desire for grasping and moving, hands and legs will be useless. Similarly it can be shown that the desire for seeing, hearing, etc., has produced the eye, ear, etc. If I have no desire to use my hand, and if I do not use it at all, within a few months it will wither away and die. In India there are some religious fanatics who hold up their arms and do not use them at all ; after a few months their arms wither and become stiff and dead. A person who lies on his back for six months loses the power of walking. There are many such instances which prove the injurious effects of the disuse of our limbs and organs.

As the human form, generally, corresponds to the human will, so the individual bodily structure corresponds to the character, desires, will and thought of the individual. Therefore the outer nature is nothing but the expression of the inner nature. This inner nature of each individual is what

re-incarnates or expresses itself successively in various forms, one after another. When a man dies the individual ego or *jiva* (as it is called in Sanskrit), which means the germ of life or the living soul of man, is not destroyed, but it continues to exist in an invisible form. It remains like a permanent thread stringing together the separate lives by the law of cause and effect. The subtle body is like a water-globule which sprang in the beginningless past from the eternal ocean of Reality; and it contains the reflection of the unchangeable light of Intelligence. As a water-globule remains sometimes in an invisible vapoury state in a cloud, then in rain or snow or ice, and again as steam or in mud, but is never destroyed, so the subtle body sometimes remains unmanifested and sometimes expresses itself in gross forms of animal or human beings, according to the desires and tendencies that are ready to manifest. It may go to heaven, that is, to some other planet, or it may be born again on this earth. It depends on the nature and strength of one's life-long tendency and bent of mind. This idea is clearly expressed in Vedanta. "The thought, will or desire which is extremely strong during lifetime, will become predominant at the time of death and will mould the inner nature of the dying person. The newly moulded inner nature will express in a new form" (*Bhagavad Gita*). "The thought or will or desire which moulds the inner nature, has the power of selecting or attracting such conditions or environments as will help it in its way of manifestation. This process corresponds in some respects to the law of "natural selection".

We shall be better able to understand that process by studying how the seeds of different trees select from the common environments different materials, and absorb and assimilate different quantities of elements. Suppose two seeds, one of an oak and the other of a chestnut, are planted in a pot. The power of growth in both the seeds is of the same nature. The environments, earth, water, heat and light are the same. But still there is some peculiarity in each of the seeds, which will absorb from the common environments different quantities of elements and other properties which are fit to help the growth of the peculiar nature and form of the fruit, flower, leaves of each tree. Suppose the chestnut is a horse-chestnut.

If, under different conditions, the peculiar nature of the horse-chestnut changes into that of a sweet chestnut, then, along with the changes in the seed, the whole nature of the tree, leaves, fruits will also be changed. It will no more attract, absorb or assimilate those substances and qualities of the environments which it did when it was a horse-chestnut. Similarly, through the law of 'natural selection' the newly moulded thought-body of the dying person will choose and attract such parts from the common environments as are helpful to its proper expression or manifestation. Parents are nothing but the principal parts of the environment of the re-incarnating individual. The newly moulded inner nature or subtle body of the individual will by the law of 'natural selection' involuntarily choose, or be unconsciously drawn to, as it were, its suitable parents and will be born of them. As, for instance, if I have a strong desire to become an artist, and if after a life-long struggle I do not succeed in being the greatest, after the death of the body I will be born of such parents and with such environments as will help me to become the best artist.

The whole process is expressed in Eastern philosophy by the doctrine of the reincarnation of the individual soul. Although this doctrine is commonly rejected in the West, it is unreservedly accepted by the vast majority of mankind of the present day, as it was in past centuries. The scientific explanation of this theory we find nowhere except in the writings of the Hindus; still we know that from very ancient times it was believed by the philosophers, sages and prophets of different countries. The ancient civilization of Egypt was built upon a crude form of the doctrine of reincarnation. Herodotus says: "The Egyptians propounded the theory that the human soul is imperishable, and that where the body of any one dies it enters into some other creature that may be ready to receive it". Pythagoras and his disciples spread it through Greece and Italy. Pythagoras says: "All has soul; all is soul wandering in the organic world, and obeying eternal will or law".

In Dryden's Ovid we read,

> Death has no power the immortal soul to slay,
> That, when its present body turns to clay,
> Seeks a fresh home, and with unlessened might
> Inspires another frame with life and light.

It was the keynote of Plato's philosophy. Plato says: "Soul is older than body. Souls are continually born over again into this life". The idea of reincarnation was spread widely in Greece and Italy by Pythagoras, Empedocles, Plato, Virgil and Ovid. It was known to the Neo-Platonists, Plotinus and Proclus. Plotinus says: "The soul leaving the body becomes that power which it has most developed. Let us fly then from here below and rise to the intellectual world, that we may not fall into a purely sensible life by allowing ourselves to follow sensible images. . . ." It was the fundamental principle of the religion of the Persian Magi. Alexander the Great accepted this idea after coming in contact with the Hindu philosophers. Julius Caesar found that the Gauls had some belief regarding the pre-existence of the human soul. The Druids of old Gaul believed that the souls of men transmigrate into those bodies whose habits and characters they most resemble. Celts and Britons were impressed with this idea. It was a favourite theme of the Arab philosophers and many Mahommedan Sufis. The Jews aodpted it after the Babylonian Captivity. Philo of Alexandria, who was a contemporary of Christ, preached amongst the Hebrews the Platonic idea of the pre-existence and rebirth of human souls. Philo says: "The company of disembodied souls is distributed in various orders. The law of some of them is to enter mortal bodies, and after certain prescribed periods be again set free." John the Baptist was according to the Jews a second Elijah ; Jesus was believed by many to be the re-appearance of some other prophet (see *Matt.* xvi. 14, also xvii, 12.). Solomon says in his Book of Wisdom: "I was a child of good nature and a good soul came to me, or rather because I was good I came into an undefiled body".

The Talmud and Cabala teach the same thing. In the Talmud it is said that Abel's soul passed into the body of Seth, and then into that of Moses. Along with the spread of the Cabala this doctrine (which was known as Transmigration and Metempsychosis) "began to take root in Judaism and then it gained believers even among men who were little inclined towards Mysticism. Juda ben Asher (Asheri) for instance, discussing this doctrine in a letter to his father endeavored to place it upon a philosophical basis" (*Jewish*

Encyclopedia, Vol. XII, p. 232). We also read, "The Cabalists eagerly adopted the doctrine on account of the vast field it offered to mystic speculations. Moreover it was almost a necessary corollary of their psychological system. The absolute condition of the soul is, according to them, its return, after developing all those perfections, the germs of which are eternally implanted in it, to the Infinite Source from which it emanated. Another term of life must therefore be vouchsafed to those souls which have not fulfilled their destiny here below, and have not been sufficiently purified for the state of union with the Primordial Cause. Hence if the soul, on its first assumption of a human body and sojourn on earth, fails to acquire that experience for which it descended from heaven and becomes contaminated by that which is polluting, it must reinhabit a body till it is able to ascend in a purified state through repeated trials." This is the theory of the Zohar, which says: "All souls are subject to transmigration ; and men do not know the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He ! They do not know that they are brought before the tribunal both before they enter into this world and after they leave it ; they are ignorant of the many transmigrations and secret probations which they have to undergo, and of the number of souls and spirits which enter into this world and which do not return to the palace of the Heavenly King. Men do not know how the souls revolve like a stone which is thrown from a sling. But the time is at hand when these mysteries will be disclosed" (*Zohar,* II 99 *b.*).

Like many of the Church Fathers the Cabalists used as their main argument in favour of the doctrine of metempsychosis as the justice of God. But for the belief in metempsychosis, they maintained the question why God often permits the wicked to lead a happy life while many righteous are miserable would be unanswerable. Then too the infliction of pain upon children would be an act of cruelty unless it is imposed in punishment of sin committed by the soul in a previous state. Isaac Abravanel sees in the commandment of the Levirate a proof of the doctrine of metempsychosis for which he gives the following reasons: (1) God in His mercy willed that another trial should be given to the soul, which having yielded to the sanguine temperament of the body had committed a capital

sin, such as murder, adultery, etc; (2) It is only just that when a man dies young, a chance should be given to his soul to execute in another body the good deeds which it had not time to perform in the first body; (3) the soul of the wicked sometimes passes into another body in order to receive its deserved punishment here below instead of in the other world where it would be much more servere (Commentary on Deuteronomy, XXV, 5).

Christianity is not exempt from this idea. Origen and other Church Fathers believed in it. Origen says: "For God, justly disposing of his creatures according to their desert, united the diversities of minds in one congruous world, that he might, as it were, adron his mansion (in which ought to be not only vases of gold and silver, but of wood also and clay, and some to honour and some to dishonour) with these diverse vases, minds or souls. To these causes the world owes its diversity, while Divine Providence disposes each according to his tendency, mind and disposition". He also says: "I think this is a question how it happens that the human mind is influenced now by the good, now by the evil. The causes of this I suspect to be more ancient than this corporael birth". The idea of Reincarnation spread so fast amongst the early Christians that Justinian was obliged to suppress it by passing a law in the Council of Constantinople in 538 A. D. The law was this: "Whoever shall support the mythical presentation of the preexistence of the soul, and the consequently wonderful opinion of its return, let him be Anathema". The Gnostics and Manichæans propagated the tenets of Reincarnation amongst the mediæval sects such as the Bogomiles and Paulicians. Some of the followers of this socalled erroneous belief were cruelly persecuted in 385 A.D.

In the seventeenth century some of the Cambridge Platonists, as Dr. Henry More and others, accepted the idea of rebirth. Most of the German philosophers of the middle ages and of recent days have advocated and upheld this doctrine. Many quotations can be given from the writings of great thinkers, like Kant, Scotus, Schelling, Fichte, Leibnitz, Schopenhauer, Giardano Bruno, Goethe, Lessing, Herder and a host of others. The great skeptic Hume says in his posthumous essay on *The Immortality of the Soul*: "The metempsychosis is

therefore the only system of this kind that philosophy can hearken to." Scientists like Flammarion and Huxley have supported this doctrine of reincarnation. Professor Huxley says: "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself, that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality" (*Evolution and Ethics,* p. 61.).

Some of the thelogical leaders have preached it. The eminent German thelogian Dr. Julius Müller supports this theory in his work on *The Christian Doctrine of Sin.* Prominent theologians, such as Dr. Dorner, Ernesti, Rückert, Edward Beecher, Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks, preached many a time touching the question of the pre-existence and rebirth of the individual soul. Swedenborg and Emerson maintained it. Emerson says in his *Essay on Experience*: "We wake and find ourselves on a stair. There are stairs below us which we seem to have ascended ; there are stairs above us, many a one, which go upward and out of sight".

Almost all of the poets, ancient or modern, profess it. William Wordsworth says in *Intimations of Immortality*:

> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar.

Tennyson writes in the *Two Voices*:

> Or, if through lower lives I came—
> Tho' all experience past became,
> Consolidate in mind and frame—
> I might forget my weaker lot ;
> For is not our first year forgot ?
> The haunts of memory echo not.

Walt Whitman says in *Leaves of Grass*:

> As to you, Life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,
> No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.

Similar passages can be quoted from almost all the poets of different countries. Even amongst the aboriginal tribes of Africa, Asia, North and South America, traces of this belief in the rebirth of souls is to be found. Nearly three-fourths of the population of Asia believe in the doctrine of reincarnation, and

through it they find a satisfactory explanation of the problem of life. There is no religion which denies the continuity of the individual soul after death.

Those who do not believe in reincarnation try to explain the world of inequalities and diversities either by the one-birth theory or by the theory of hereditary transmission. Neither of these theories, however, is sufficient to explain the inequalities that we meet with in our everyday life. Those who believe in the one-birth theory, that we have come here for the first and last time, do not understand that the acquirement of wisdom and experience is the purpose of human life; nor can they explain why children who die young should come into existence and pass away without getting the opportunity to learn anything or what purpose is served by their coming thus for a few days, remaining in utter ignorance and then passing away without gaining anything whatever. The Christian dogma, based on the one-birth theory, tells us that the child which dies soon after its birth is sure to be saved and will enjoy eternal life and everlasting happiness in heaven. The Christians who really believe in this dogma ought to pray to their reavenly Father for the death of their children immediately after their birth and ought to thank the merciful Father when the grave closes over their little forms. Thus the one-birth theory of Christian theology does not remove any difficulty.

Two great religions, Judaism with its two off-spring—Christianty and Mohamedanism, and also Zoroastrianism, still up-hold the one-birth theory. The followers of these, shutting their eyes to the absurdity and unreasonableness of such a theory, believe that human souls are created out of nothing at the time of the birth of their bodies and that they continue to exist throughout eternity either to suffer or to enjoy because of the deeds performed during the short period of their earthly existence. Here the question arises why should a man be held responsible throughout eternity for the works which he was forced or predestined to perform by the will of the Lord of the universe? The theory of predestination and grace, instead of explaining the difficulty, makes God partial and unjust. If the omnipotent personal God created human souls out of nothing, could He not make all souls equally good and happy? Why does He make one to enjoy all the blessings of life and another

to suffer all miseries throughout eternity? Why is one born with good tendencies and another with evil ones? Why is one man virtuous throughout his life and another bestial? Why is one born intelligent and another idiotic? If God out of His own will made all these inequalities, or, in other words, if God created one man to suffer and another to enjoy, then how partial and unjust must He be! He must be worse than a tyrant. How can we worship Him, how call Him just and merciful?

Some people try to save God from this charge of partiality and injustice by saying that all good things of this universe are the work of God, and all evil things are the work of a demon or Satan. God created everything good, but it was Satan who brought evil into this world, made everything bad. Now let us see how far such a statement is logically correct. Good and evil are two relative terms; the existence of one depends upon that of the other. Good cannot exist without evil, and evil cannot exist without being related to good. When God created what we call good, He must have created evil at the same time, otherwise He could not create good alone. If the creator of evil, call him by whatever name you like, had brought evil into this world, he must have created it simultaneously with God; otherwise it would have been impossible for God to create good, which can exist only as related to evil. As such they will have to admit that the Creators of good and evil sat together at the same time to create this world, which is a mixture of good and evil. Consequently, both of them are equally powerful, and are limited by each other. Therefore neither of them is infinite in powers or omnipotent. So we cannot say that the almighty God of the universe created good alone and not the evil.

Another argument which the Vedantists advance in support of the theory of reincarnation, is that 'nothing is destroyed in the universe.' Destruction in the sense of the annihilation of a thing is unknown to the vedantic phlosophers, just as it is unknown to the modern scientists. They say: "non-existence can never become existence and existence can never become non-existence", or, in other words, that which did not exist can never exist, and conversely that which exists in any form can never become non-existent. This is the law of nature.

As such, the impressions or ideas which we now have, together with the powers which we possess, will not be destroyed but will remain with us in some form of other. Our bodies may change, but the powers, *karmas, samskaras* or impressions and the materials which manufactured our bodies must remain in us in an unmanifested form. They will never be destroyed. Again science tells us that that which remains in an unmanifested or potential state, must at some time or other be manifested in a kinetic or actual form. Therefore we shall get other bodies, sooner or later. It is for this reason said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Birth must be followed by death and death must be followed by birth". For such a continuously recurring series of births and deaths each germ of life must go through. Another consideration is that the beginning, ending and continuing are conceptions of the human mind; their significance depends entirely upon our conception of time. But we all know that time has no absolute existence. It is merely a form of our knowledge of our own existence in relation to that of nature. The conception of time vanishes at the sleep of death, just as it does every night when we are in sound sleep. Death resembles the state of our sound sleep. The soul wakes up from the sleep of death just in the same manner as the insects awake in spring after sleeping the long and rigid winter-sleep, as a chrysalis in the bed of a cocoon spun by itself in autumn. Nature teaches us the great lesson of rebirth and the similarity between sleep and death by the rejuvenation of the chrysalis in the spring. After death the soul wakes up and puts on or manufactures the garment of a new body, just in the same manner as we put on new clothes after throwing away the old and worn-out ones. Thus the soul continues to manifest itself over and over again either on the human or any other plane of existence, being bound by the law of karma or of cause and sequence.

> Death, so called, is but older matter dressed
> In some new form. And in a varied vest,
> From tenement to tenement though tossed,
> The soul is still the same, the figure only lost.
>
> *Poem on Pythagoras, Dryden's Ovid.*

Here it may be asked, if we existed before out birth, why do we not remember? This is one of the strongest objections

often raised against the belief in pre-existence. Some people deny the existence of the soul in the past simply because they cannot remember the events of their past. Others, again, who hold memory as the standard of existence, say, if our memory of the present ceases to exist at the time of death, with it we shall also cease to be ; we cannot be immortal because they hold that memory is the standard of life, and if we do not remember then we are not the same beings.

Vedanta answer these questions by saying that it is possible for us to remember our previous existences. Those who have read Raja Yoga will recall that in the 18th aphorism of the third chapter it is said: "By perceiving the *samskaras* one acquires the knowledge of past lives". Here the *samskaras* mean the impressions of the past experience which lie dormant in our subliminal self, and are never lost. Memory is nothing but the awakening and rising of latent impressions above the threshold of consciousness. A Raja Yogi, through powerful concentration upon these dormant impressions of the subconscious mind, can remember all the events of his past lives. There have been many instances in India of Yogis who could know not only their own past lives but correctly tell those of others. It is said that Buddha remembered five hundred of his previous births.

Our subliminal self or the subconscious mind is the storehouse of all the impressions that we gather through our experiences during our lifetime. They are stored up and pigeon-holed there, in the *chitta*, as it is called in Vedanta. *Chitta* means the same subconscious mind or subliminal self which is the storehouse of all impressions and experiences. And these impressions remain latent until favourable conditions rouse them and bring them out on the plane of consciousness. Here let us take an illstration: In a dark room, pictures are thrown on a screen by lantern-slides. The room is absolutely dark. We are looking at the pictures. Suppose we open a window and allow the rays of the midday sun to fall upon the screen. Would we be able to see those picturse? No. Because the more powerful flood of light will subdue the light of the lantern and the pictures. But although they are invisible to our eyes we cannot deny their existence on the screen. Similarly, the pictures of the events of our previous lives upon the screen of the

subliminal self may be invisible to us at present, but they exist there. Why are they invisible to us now? Because the more powerful light of sense-consciousness has subdued them. If we close the windows and doors of our senses from outside contact and darken the inner chamber of our self, then by focusing the light of consciousness and concentrating the mental rays we shall be able to know and remember our past lives, and all the events and experiences thereof. Those who wish therefore to develop their memory and remember their past, should practice Raja Yoga, and learn the method of acquiring the power of concentration by shutting the doors and windows of their senses. And that power of concentration must be helped by the power of self-control, that is, by controlling the doors and windows of our own senses.

These dormant impressions, whether we remember them or not, are the chief factors in moulding our individual characters with which we are born, and they are the causes of the inequalities and diversities which we find around us. When we study the characters and powers of geniuses and prodigies, we cannot deny the pre-existence of the soul. Whatever the soul has mastered in a previous life manifests in the present. The memory of particular events is not so important. If we possess the wisdom and knowledge which we gathered in our previous lives, then it matters very little whether or not we remember the particular events, or the struggles which we want through in order to gain that knowledge. Those particular things may not come to us in our memory, but we have not lost the wisdom. Now, study your own present life and you will see that in this life you have gained some experience. The particular events and the struggles which you went through are passing out of your memory, but the experience has moulded your character, and the knowledge, which you have gained through that experience, has shaped you in a different manner. You will not have to go through those different events again to remember how you acquired that experience. It is not necessary, the wisdom gained is quite enough.

Then, again, we find among ourselves persons who are born with some wonderful powers. Take, for instance, the power of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control. One is born with the power of self-control highly

developed, and that self-control may not be acquired by another after years of hard struggle. Why is there this difference? Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was born with Godconsciousness, and he went into the highest state of *samadhi* when he was four years old; but this state is very difficult for other Yogis to acquire. There was a Yogi who came to see Ramakrishna. tHe was an old man possessed wonderful powers, and he said: "I have struggled for forty years to acquire that state which is natural with you." There are many such instances which show that pre-existence is a fact, and that these latent or dormant impressions of previous lives are the chief factors in moulding the individual character without depending upon the memory of the past. Because we cannot remember our past, because of the loss of memory of the particular events, the soul's progress is not arrested. The soul will continue to progress further and further, even though the memory may be weak.

Each individual soul possesses this storehouse of previous experiences in the background, in the subconscious mind. Take the instance of two lovers. What is love? It is the attraction between two souls. This love does not die with the death of the body. True love survives death and continues to grow, to become stronger and stronger. Eventually it brings the two souls together, and makes them one. The theory of pre-existence alone can explain why two souls at first sight know each other and become attached to each other by the tie of friendship. This mutual love will continue to grow and will become stronger, and in the end will bring these lovers together, no matter where they go. Therefore, Vedanta does not say that the death of the body will end the attraction or the attachmen of two souls; but as the souls are immortal so their relation will continue forever.

The Yogis know how to develop memory and how to read past lives. They say, time and space exist in relation to our present mental condition; if we can rise above this plane, our higher mind sees the past and future just as we see things before our eyes. Those who wish to satisfy the idle curiosity of their minds, may spend heir energy by trying to recollect their past lives. But I think it will be much more helpful to us if we devote our time and energy in moulding our future and in trying to be better than we are now, because the recollec-

tion of our former condition would only force us to make a bad use of the present. How unhappy he must be who knows that the wicked deeds of his past life will surely react on him and will bring distress, misery, unhappiness or suffering within a few days or a few months. Such a man would be so restless and unhappy that he would not be able to do any work properly; he would constantly think in what form misery would appear to him. He would not be able to eat or even sleep. He would be most miserable. Therefore, we ought to regard it as a great blessing that we do not recollect our past lives and past deeds. Vedanta says, do not waste your valuable time in thinking of your past lives, do not look backward during the tiresome journey through the different stages of evolution, always look forward and try first to attain to the highest point of spiritual development; then if you want to know your past lives, you will recollect them all. Nothing will remain unknown to you, the Knower of the universe. When the all-knowing Divine Self will manifest through you, time and space will vanish and past and future will be changed into the eternal present. Then you will say as Sri Krishna said to Arjuna, in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "Both you and I have passed through many lives; you do not recollect any, but I know them all" (Ch. iv., 5.).

CHAPTER II

HEREDITY AND REINCARNATION

Those who accept the theory of heredity deny the existence of the human soul as an entity separable from the gross physical organism. Consequently, they do not discuss the question whether the individual soul existed in the past or will continue to exist after the death of the body. This kind of question does not disturb their minds. They generally maintain that the individual soul is inseparable from the body or the brain or nervous system; consequently what we call soul or the conscious entity or the thinker is produced along with the birth of the organism or brain, lasts as long as the body lasts and dies when the organism is dissolved into its elements. But those, on the other hand, who accept the theory of reincarnation admit the existence of soul as a conscious entity which is independent of the physical organsim, that it continues to live after death and that it existed before the birth of the body.

The theory of heredity has always been supported by the materialistic scientists, atheists and agnostics of all ages and also by those who believe in the special creation of the first man and woman at a certain definite time and that their qualities, character, life and soul have been transmitted to all humanity through successive generations. The commonly accepted meaning of the theory of heredity is that all the well-marked peculiarities, both physical and mental, in the parents are handed on to the children; or, in other words, heredity is that property of an organism by which its peculiar nature is transmitted to its descendants.

In the whole history of humanity there has never been a time when this question of heredity has been discussed so minutely and in so many different ways as it has been in the present century. Although this theory was known in the East by the ancient Vedanta philosophers, by the Buddhists of the pre-Christian era and by the Greek philosophers in the West, still it has received a new impetus and has grown with new strength since the introduction of the Darwinian theory of the

evolution of species. Along with the latest discoveries in physiology, biology, embryology and other branches of modern science, the popular simple meaning of heredity—that the offspring not only resemble their parents among animals as well as among men, but inherit all the individual peculiarities, life and character of their parents—has taken the shape of the most complicated and difficult problem which it is almost impossible to solve. Our minds are no longer satisfied with Haeckel's definition that heredity is simply an overgrowth of the individual, a simple continuity of growth; but we want to know the particular method by which hereditary transmission takes place. We ask, how can a single cell reproduce the whole body of the offspring, its mind, character and all the peculiarities of an organism? Out of the myriads of cells of which a body is composed, what kind of cell is that which possesses the power of reproducing the peculiarities, both mental and physical, which are to be found in the form of the new-born babe? This is the most puzzling of all the problems which the scientific mind has ever encountered. The fundamental question connected with the theory of heredity is: How can a single cell of the body contain within itself all the hereditary tendencies of the whole organism and the nature, mind and soul of the parents? Darwin's theory of Pangenesis,[1] which is only a renewed form of a similar old theory started by the Greek philosopher Democritus,[2] does not explain the problem satisfactorily. On the other hand, Professor Galton, Professor Roth, August Weismann and others of the same school have disproved it. These scientits, after closer observation and experiment, have raised strong objections against the commonly accepted theory of heredity, and have said that 'acquired chracters' are never transmitted. The parents may acquire certain characters by their individual efforts, but they cannot transmit them to their children. August Weismann says: "an organ-

[1] Darwin's provisional hypothesis of Pangenesis teaches: "Particles of an excessively minute size are continually given off from all the cells of the body; these particles collect in the reproductive cells, and hence any change arising in the organism, at any time during its life, is represented in the reproductive cell."—Darwin: *The Variation of Animals and Plants under Domestication*, Vol. II, pp. 349-399.

[2] According to Democritus, the sperm is secreted from all parts of the body of both sexes during intercourse and is animated by a bodily force; that is, the sperm from each part of the body reproduces the same part.

ism cannot acquire anything unless it has the predisposition to acquire it" (*Heredity*, Vol. I, p. 171.).

Many of you are already familiar with Weismann's theory of the 'continuity of the germ-plasm'. He denies the old theory that we inherit everything from our parents, or that the hereditary tendencies of the parents predominate in one child, of the grandfather in another, those of the grandmother in a third, and of the great-grandfather, or great-great-grandmother in the fourth; but he has simplified this whole problem by admitting the existence of a substance which he calls 'germ-plasm'. He says that heredity is brought about by the transference from one generation to another of a substance with a definite chemical and, above all, molecular constitution, and he calls this substance 'germ plasm'.

Dr. Weismann believes that this germ-plasm contains the potentialities of all the tendencies which are developed in an individual and that the protoplasmic molecules possess the power of growing, that is, of assimilating food and of increasing by means of division. These germ-cells or germ-plasms continue from one generation to another. "They possess the same molecular constitution, and they would therefore pass through exactly the same stages under certain conditions of development and would form the same final product. The hypothesis of the continuity of the germ-plasm gives an identical starting-point to each successive generation, and thus explains how it is that an identical product arises from all of them. In other words, the hypothesis explains heredity as part of the underlying problems of assimilation and of the causes which act directly during ontogeny" (Vol. I, p. 170.).

According to Weismann, all the peculiarities which we find in an organism are not inherited by the organism from that of the parents. He says: "Nothing can arise in an organism unless the pre-disposition to it is pre-existent, for every acquired character is simply the reaction of the organism upon a certain stimulus" (Vol. I, p. 172.). Therefore the germ-cells do not inherit all the peculiarities of the parents, but possess the predisposition or a potentiality of the tendencies which gradually develop into individual characters.

We shall be able to understand his theory better from the following quotations, which give his own words. He says:

"I have called this substance 'germ-plasm,' and have assumed that it possesses a highly complex structure, conferring upon it the power of developing into a complex organism" (*Heredity*, Vol. I, p. 170.). Again he says: "There is, therefore, continuity of the germ-plasm from one generation to another. One might represent the germ-plasm by the metaphor of a long, creeping rootstock from which plants arise at intervals, these latter representing the individuals of successive generations. Hence it follows that the transmission of acquired characters is an impossibility, for, if the germ-plasm is not formed anew in each individual, but is derived from that which preceded it, its structure, and, above all, its molecular constitution, cannot depend upon the individual in which it happens to occur, but such an individual only forms, as it were, the nutritive soil at the expense of which the germ-plasm grows, while the latter possessed its characteristic structure from the beginning, viz., before the commencement of growth. But the tendencies of heredity, of which the germ-plasm is the bearer, depend upon this very molecular structure, and hence only those characters can be transmitted through successive generations which have been previously inherited, viz., those characters which were potentially contained in the structure of the germ-plasm. It also follows that those other characters which have been acquired by the influence of special external conditions, during the lifetime of the parent, cannot be transmitted at all" (Vol. I, p. 273.). In conclusion, Weismann writes: "But at all events we have gained this much, that the only facts which appear to directly prove a transmission of acquired characters have been refuted, and that the only firm foundation on which this hypothesis has been hitherto based has been destroyed" (Vol. I, p. 461.).

Thus we see how far the theory of heredity has been pushed by the great scientific investigators of the present age. We have no longer any right to believe in the old oft-refuted hypothesis which assumes that each individual organism produces germ-cells afresh again and again and transmits all its powers developed and acquired by the parents; but, on the contrary, we have come to know today that parents are nothing but mere channels through which these germ-plasms or germ-cells manifest their peculiar tendencies and powers which exited

in them from the very beginning. The main point is that the germs are not created by the parents, but that they existed in previous generations.

Now, what are those germs like? Wherefrom do they acquire these tendencies and peculiarities? That is another very difficult problem. Dr. Weismann and his followers say that these peculiarities are gained or inherited 'from the common stock', but what that common stock is they do not explain. Where is that common stock and why will certain germs acquire certain tendencies and other germs retain other peculiarities? What regulates them? These questions are not solved. So far we have gathered from Dr. Weismann's explanation that the parents are not the creators of the germs, but, on the contrary, that the germs existed before the birth of the body, before the growth of the body, in previous generations, or in the common stock of the universe. The previous generations are dead and gone, so we may say that they existed in the universe. We cannot now believe the old, crude, often-refuted idea that God creates the germ at the time of birth and puts into it all the powers and peculiarities of the parents. This theory makes God unjust and partial, so it does not appeal to us any more. We need better and more rational explanations. The one-birth theory, which has been preached by Christian ministers and other religionists for so many years, does not remove the difficulties, does not explain the cause of the inequalities and diversities, does not answer the question whether we acquire all the tendencies and peculiarities of the parents or whether acquired characters cannot be transmitted. We have already seen that these questions are left unsolved by the one-birth theory of Christianity and of Judaism. But this theory of 'continuity of the germ-plasm' pushes the question of heredity to the door of reincarnation. If modern science can explain what that common stock is and why and how these germs retain those peculiarities and tendencies, then the answer will be complete and not until then. The Vedanta philosophy, however, has already explained the cause of the potentiality in the germ of life or 'germ-plasm' or germ-cell.

Vedanta solves this difficulty by saying that each of these germ-plasms or germ-cells is nothing but the subtle form of a reincarnating individual, containing potentially all the experi-

ences, characters, tendencies, and desires which one had in one's previous life. It existed before the birth of the body and it will continue after the death of the body. This germ or subtle body is not the same as the astral body of the Theosophists, or the double of the metaphysical thinkers or the disembodied spirit of the spiritualists; but it is an ethereal center of activity, physical, mental and organic. It is a center which possesses the tendency to manifest these powers on different planes of existence. It contains the minute particles of matter or ethereal substance and the life principle or vital energy by which we live and move. It also possesses the mental powers and sense powers; but all these remain latent, just as in a seed we see that the powers of growth, of assimilation and of producing flowers and fruits are latent.

At the time of death the individual soul contracts and remains in the form of a germ of life. It is for this reason, Vedanta teachers say that it is neither the will of God nor the fault of the parents that forms the characters of children, but each child is responsible for its tendencies, capacities, powers and character. It is own karma or past actions that make a child a murderer or a saint, virtuous or sinful. The stored-up potentialities in a subtle body manifest in the character of an individual.

The argument advanced by the supporters of the theory of hereditary transmission does not furnish a satisfactory explanation of the cause of the inequalities and diversities of the universe. Why is it that the children of the same parents show a marked dissimilarity to their parents and to each other? Why do twins develop into dissimilar characters and possess opposite qualities, although they are born of the same parents at the same time and brought up under similar conditions and environments? How can heredity explain such cases? Suppose a man has five children; one is honest and saintly, another is an idiot, the third becomes a murderer, the fourth a genius or prodigy, and the fifth a cripple and diseased. Who made these dissimilarities? They cannot be accidents. There is no such thing as an accident. Every event of the universe is bound by the law of cause and effect. There must be some cause of these inequalities. Who made one honest and saintly, another an idiot, and so forth? But parents cannot be the cause. They

never dreamed that they would beget a murderer or a villain or an idiot. On the contrary, all parents wish their children to be the best and happiest. But in spite of such desires they get such children. Why? What is the cause? Does the theory of heredity explain it? No, not at all.

Suppose a man, twenty-four years old, who has certain traits, like musical or artistic talents, such as painting and so on, has a crooked nose and other peculiarities, like cross-eyes, which resemble those of his grandfather. Suppose his grandfather died six years before he was born. Now, those who believe in the theory of heredity will say that this young man inherited all these peculiarities from his grandfather. When did he inherit? His grandfather had died six years before he was born. He inherited, of course, in the form of that germ. What is that germ like? A minute protoplasm, a jelly-like substance, and if you examine it with a powerful microscope you will hardly find any difference between it and the protoplasmic germ of a dog, or of a cat or of a tree. It is smaller than a pin's head. And in that state this young man inherited all these peculiarities from his grandfather; or, in other words, before he had a nose, he got a crooked nose; before he had eyes, he inherited cross-eyes, and before he had any brain, he inherited all the wonderful powers—his musical and artistic talents. Does it not seem absurd to you? Even if we admit this theory of heredity, then what do we understand? That the whole of this young man existed in the form of a protoplasm before he was born. His cross-eyes, his crooked nose, his artistic talents—all these preexisted in the form of a protoplasmic cell. This leads up to the same thing which is taught by the theory of reincarnation, or, in other words, if it be possible for this young man to remain in the form of a protoplasm and inherit all these things before his birth, why cannot we believe that the soul or the subtle body of this young man possessed them from the very beginning? According to Vedanta, this young man was not the creature of his grandfather, but he had his own independent existence; only by coming through the channel of his parents he had received certain characteristic impressions, just as a tree in its process of growth will receive from the environments certain peculiarities when it assimilates those properties.

The doctrine of reincarnation alone can explain satisfactorily and rationally the diversities among children and the reason of many instances of uncommon powers and genius displayed in childhood. The theory of heredity has up to this time failed to give any good reason for them. Why is it that Pascal, when twelve years old, succeeded in discovering for himself the greater part of plane geometry. How could the shepherd Mangiamelo, when five years old, calculate like an arithmatical machine. Think of the child Zerah Colburn: when he was under eight years of age he could solve the most tremendous mathematical problems instantly and without using any figures. "In one instance he took the number 8 and raised it up progressively to the sixteenth power and instantly mentioned the result which contained 15 figures—281,474,976,710,-656". Of course, he was right in every figure. When asked the square root of numbers consisting of six figures, he would state the result instantly with perfect accuracy. He used to give the cube root of numbers in the hundreds of millions the very moment when it was asked. Somebody asked him once how many minutes there were in 48 years, he answered, 25,288,-800.

Mozart, the great musician, wrote a sonata when he was four years old and an opera in his eighth year. Theresa Milanolla played the violin with such skill that many people thought that she must have played before her birth. There are many such instances of wonderful powers exhibited by artists and painters when they were quite young. Sankaracharya, the great commentator of the Vedanta philosophy, finished his commentary when he was twelve years old. How can such cases be explained by the theory of hereditary transmission? Many of you have heard of the wonderful musical talents of Blind Tom. This blind negro slave was born on his master's plantation and was brought up as typical negro. He received no training in music or in any other line. One day when his master's family were at dinner he happened to come into his master's parlor and displayed his marvelous musical power for the first time by playing on his master's piano. Afterwards he was exhibited in different states of this country. Physically he was nothing but a typical negro. His intellect was very poor, but in music he was a master. His musical talents were so great that he

composed music for himself and played his own compositions. Sometimes after hearing a new piece of rapid music once, he could reproduce it note for note. Where did he get all these powers? From whom did he inherit them? His parents perhaps never heard of a piano. He never had a lesson in his life, and he could not have understood even if he had had any. Not long ago I saw a girl of about six years, who played the piano most beautifully and who could reproduce the most difficult music after hearing it once. It seems to me that she must have played the piano in her previous incarnation. This is the only explanation that we can give.

Does heredity explain such cases? No. These illustrations are sufficient to disprove the theory of 'cumulative heredity'. 'Cumulative' means gradualness. The believers in this theory say that a genius is the result of cumulative heredity, that is, it presents itself by degrees from less genius to greater and still greater and so on. In the whole history of the genealogy of geniuses, like Homer, Plato, Shakespeare, Goethe, Raphael, there never was in their families almost Plato, almost Shakespeare, or almost Goethe. Neither is it possible to trace the extraordinary powers of any of these back to any member of their ancestral line. Therefore we can say that no other theory than that of reincarnation can explain satisfactorily the causes which produce geniuses and prodigies in this world.

Those who accept the truth of reincarnation do not blame their parents for their poor talents; or for not possessing extraordinary powers, but they remain content with their own lot, knowing that they have made themselves as they are today by their own thoughts and deeds in their previous incarnations. They understand the meaning of the saying 'what thou sowest thou must reap', and always endeavour to mould their future by better thoughts and better deeds. They explain all the inequalities and diversities of life and character by the law of 'karma', which governs the process of reincarnation as well as the gradual evolution of the germs of life from lower to higher stages of existence.

CHAPTER III

EVOLUTION AND REINCARNATION

The amazing achievements of modern science have been opening every day new gates of wisdom and slowly bringing human minds nearer and nearer to the ultimate reality of the universe. The fire of knowledge, kindled by science, has already burnt down many dogmas and beliefs, held sacred by the superstition of the past, which stood in the way of truth-seeking minds. In the first place science has disproved the theory of the creation of the universe out of nothing by the action of some supernatural power. It has shown that the universe did not appear in its present form or come into existence all of a sudden only a few thousand years ago, but that it has taken ages to pass through different stages before it could reach its present condition. Each of these stages was directly related to a previous stage by the law of causation, which always operates in accordance with definite rules. The phenomena of the universe, according to science, are subject to evolution, or gradual change and progressive development from a relatively uniform condition to a relative complexity. From the greatest solar system down to the smallest blade of grass, everything in the universe has taken its present shape and form through this cosmic process of evolution. Our planet earth has gradually evolved, perhaps out of a nebulous mass which existed at first in a gaseous state. The sun, moon, stars, satellites and other planets have come into existence by going through innumerable changes produced by that evolutionary process of the cosmos. Through the same process plants, insects, fishes, reptiles, birds, animals, man, and all living matter that inhabit this earth have evolved from minute germs of life into their present forms. The theory of evolution says that man does not come into existence all of a sudden, but is related to lower animals and to plants, either directly or indirectly. The germ of life had passed through various stages of physical form before it could appear as a man. That branch of science, which is called Embryology, has proved the fact that 'man is the epitome of the whole creation'. It tells

that the human body before its birth passes through all the different stages of the animal kingdom, such as the polyp, fish, reptile, dog, ape, and at last, man. If we remember that nature is always consistent, that her laws are uniform and that whatever exists in the microcosm exists also in the macrocosm, and then study nature, we shall find that all the germs of life which exist in the universe are bound to pass through stages resembling the embryonic types before they can appear in the form of man.

In explaining the theory of evolution, science says that there are two principal factors in the process of evolution; the first is the tendency to vary, which exists in all living forms whether vegetable or animal; the second is the tendency of environment to influence that variation, either favourably or unfavourably. Without the first, evolution of any kind would be absolutely impossible. But the cause of that innate tendency to vary is still unknown to science. Upon the second depends the law of natural selection. The variation must be adapted to favourable conditions of life; consequently, either the germ of life will select suitable environments or vary itself in order to suit the surrounding conditions, if they are unfavourable. But the agent of this selective process is the struggle for existence, which is a no less important factor. Thus evolution depends on these three laws: tendency to vary, or variation, natural selection, and struggle for existence. Science tries to explain through these three laws the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution of mankind. But the theory of evolution will remain unintelligible until science can trace the cause of that innate 'tendency to vary' which exists in every stage of all living forms.

If we study closely we find that man's 'self' consists of two natures, one animal and the other moral or spiritual. Animal nature includes all the animal propensities, desire for sense enjoyments, love of self, fear of death and struggle for existence. Each of these is to be found in lower animals as well as in human beings, the difference being only in degree and not in kind. In a savage tribe the expression of this animal nature is simple and natural, while in a highly civilized nation it is expressed not in a simple and straightforward manner, but in an artful and refined way. In a civilized community the same

nature working through varied device, policy and plan brings the same results in a more polished form. In the struggle for existence, amongst lower animals and savage tribes, those who are physically strong, survive and gain advantage over those who are physically weak ; while, in the civilized world, the same result is obtained, not by displaying physical force, but by art, diplomacy, policy, strategy and skill. Various kinds of defensive and offensive weapons have been invented to conquer those who are less skillful in using them, although they may be physically stronger. The simple expression of animal nature which we notice in savages and lower animals, by the natural process of evolution has gradually become more and more complex, as we find in the civilized nations of the world. The energy of the lower human nature is spent chiefly in the struggle for material existence.

But there is another nature in man which is higher than this. It expresses itself in various ways, but on a higher plane. Love of truth, mastery over passion, control of the senses, disinterested self-sacrifice, mercy and kindness to all creatures, desires to help the distressed, forgiveness, faith in a supreme Being and devotion ; all these are the expressions of that higher moral and spiritual nature. They cannot be explained as developed from animal nature by means of the struggle for material existence. For these qualities are not to be found in lower animals, although the struggle for existence is there. The moral and spiritual nature of human beings cannot be traced as the outgrowth or gradual development of the animal nature. There is a dispute among the evolutionists as to the method of explaining their cause. Some say that these higher faculties have evolved out of the lower ones and have developed by variation and natural selection ; while others hold that some other higher influence, law or agency is required to account for them.

Professor Huxley says: "As I have already urged, the practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion, it demands self-restraint ; in place of thrusting aside or treading down all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely

respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed not so much to the survival of the fittest as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. It repudiates the gladiatorial theory of existence. It demands that each man who enters into the enjoyment of the advantages of a polity shall be mindful of his debt to those who have laboriously constructed it, and shall take heed that no act of his weakens the fabric in which he has been permitted to live. Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process, and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage" (*Evolution and Ethics*, pp. 81-82.).

Prof. Calderwood says: "So far as human organism is concerned, there seem no overwhelming obstacles to be encountered by an evolution theory, but it seems impossible under such a theory to account for the appearance of the thinking, selfregulating life distinctly human". Thus, according to some of the best thinkers, the explanation of the moral and spiritual nature of man as a development of the animal nature, is quite insufficient and unsatisfactory. The theory of natural selection in the struggle for existence cannot explain the cause of the higher nature of man. We cannot say that a theory is complete, because it explains many facts. On the contrary, if it fails to explain a single fact, then it is proved to be incomplete. As such, the theory that cannot explain satisfactorily the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man cannot be accepted as a complete theory. That explanation will be considered as complete which will explain most satisfactorily all the various manifestations of the animal, moral and spiritual nature. Moreover, supposing the 'tendency to vary' has evolved into the moral and spiritual nature of man, science does not explain the cause of that tendency to vary, nor how animal nature can be transformed into moral and spiritual nature. Is that 'tendency to vary' indefinite, or is it limited by any definite law? Science does not say anything about it.

The explanation of the theologians, that the spiritual nature has been superadded to the animal nature by some extra-cosmic spiritual agency is not scientific, nor does it appeal to our reason.

Now, let us see what Vedanta has to say on this point. Vedanta accepts evolution and admits the laws of variation and natural selection, but goes a step beyond modern science by explaining the cause of that 'tendency to vary'. It says: "There is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning". It is a law which governs the process of evolution as well as the law of causation. If we admit this grand truth of nature, then it will not be difficult to explain by the theory of evolution the gradual manifestation of the higher nature of man. The tendency of scientific monism is towards that end.

Some of the modern scientists who hold the monistic position have found out the same truth which was discovered long ago by the Vedantic philosophers in India. J. Arthur Thomson, an eminent English scientist of the present day, in his book on *The Study of Animal Life* says: "The world is one, not two-fold, the spiritual influx is the primal reality and there is nothing in the end which was not also in the beginning". But the evolutionists do not accept this truth. Let us understand it clearly. It means that that which existed potentially at the time of the begining of evolution has gradually manifested in the various stages and grades of evolution. If we admit that a unicellular germ of life or a bioplasm, after passing through various stages of evolution, has ultimately manifested in the form of a highly developed human being, then we shall have to admit the potentiality of all the manifested powers in that germ or bioplasm, because the law is "that which exists in the end existed also in the beginning". The animal nature, higher nature, mind, intellect, spirit, all these exist potentially in the germ of life. If we do not admit this law, then the problem will arise: How can non-existence become existent? How can something come out of nothing? How can that come into existence which did not exist before? Each germ of life, according to Vedanta, possesses infinite potentialities and infinite possibilities. The powers that remain latent have the natural tendency to manifest perfectly and to become actual. In their attempt they vary according to the surrounding environments, selecting suitable conditions or remaining latent as long as circumstances do not favour them.

Therefore, variation, according to Vedanta, is caused by this attempt of the potential powers to become actual. When

life and mind began to evolve, the possibilities of action and reaction hitherto latent in the germ of life became real and all things became, in a sense, new. Nobody can imagine the amount of latent power which a minute germ of life possesses until it expresses in gross form on the physical plane. By seeing the seed of a Banyan tree, one who has never seen the tree cannot imagine what powers lie dormant in it. When a baby is born we cannot tell whether he will be a great saint, or a wonderful artist, or a philosopher, or an idiot, or a villain of the worst type. Parents know nothing about his future. Along with his growth certain latent powers gradually begin to manifest. Those which are the strongest and most powerful will overcome others and check their course for some time; but when the powers that remain subdued by stronger ones get favourable conditions they will appear in manifested forms. As, for instance, chemical forces may slumber in matter for a thousand years, but when the contact with the re-agents sets them free, they appear again and produce certain results. For thousands of years galvanism slumbered in copper and zinc, which lay quitely beside silver. As soon as all three are brought together under the required conditions silver is consumed in flame. A dry seed of a plant may preserve the slumbering power of growth through two or three thousand years and then reappear under favourable conditions. Sir G. Wilkinson, the great archæologist, found some grains of wheat in a hermetically sealed vase in a grave at Thebes, which must have lain there for three thousand years. When Mr. Pettigrew sowed them they grew into plants. Some vegetable roots found in the hands of an Egyptian mummy, which must have been at least two thousand years old, were planted in a flower-pot, and they grew and flourished. Thus, whenever the latent powers get favourable conditions, they manifest according to their nature, even after thousands of years.

Similarly, there are many instances of slumbering mental powers. After remaining dormant for a long period in our normal condition, they may, in certain abnormal states—such as madness, delirium, catalepsy, hypnotic sleep and so forth—flash out into luminous consciousness and throw into absolute oblivion the power that are manifesting in the normal state. Talents for eloquence, music, painting, and uncommon in-

genuity in several mechanical arts, traces of which were never found in the ordinary normal condition, are often evolved in the state of madness. Somnambulists in deep sleep have solved most difficult mathematical problems and performed various acts with results which have surprised them in their normal waking states. Thus we can understand that each individual mind is the storehouse of many powers, various impressions and ideas, some of which manifest in our normal state, while others remain latent. Our present condition of mind and body is nothing but the manifested form of certain dormant powers that exist in ourselves. If new powers are roused up and begin to manifest the whole nature will be changed into a new form. The manifestation of latent powers is at the bottom of the evolution of one species into another. This idea has been expressed in a few words by Patanjali, the great Hindu evolutionist who lived long before the Christian era.[1] In the second aphorism of the fourth chapter (see "Raja Yoga" by Swami Vivekananda, p. 210) it is said, "The Evolution into another species is caused by the in-filling of nature."

The nature is filled not from without but from within. Nothing is superadded to the individual soul from outside. The germs are already there, but their development depends upon their coming in contact with the necessary conditions requisite for proper manifestation. We sometimes see a wicked man suddenly become saint-like. There are instances of murderers and robbers becoming saints. A religionist will explain the cause of their sudden change, by saying that the grace of the Almighty has fallen upon them and transformed their whole nature. But Vedanta says that the moral and spiritual powers that remained latent in them have been roused up, and the

[1] The reader ought to know that the doctrine of evolution was known in India long before the Christian era. About the seventh century, B.C., Kapila, the father of Hindu Evolutionists, explained this theory for the first time through logic and science.

Sir Monier Monier Williams says: "Indeed if I may be allowed the anachronism, the Hindus were Spinozites more than 2 000 years before the existence of Spinoza; and Darwinians many centuries before Darwin; and Evolutionists many centuries before the doctrine of Evolution had been accepted by the scientists of our time and before any word like Evolution existed in any language of the world." *Hinduism and Brahminism*, p. 12. Prof. Huxley says: "To say nothing of Indian Sages to whom Evolution was a familiar notion ages before Paul of Tarsus was born."—(*Science and Hebrew Tradition*, p. 150).

result is the sudden transformation. None can tell when or how the slumbering powers will wake up and begin to manifest. The germ of life, or the individual soul as it is ordinarily called, possesses infinite possibilities. Each germ of life is studying, as it were, the book of its own nature by unfolding one page after another. When it has gone through all the pages, or, in other words, all the stages of evolution, perfect knowledge is acquired, and its course is finished. We have read our lower nature by turning each page, or, in other words, by passing through each stage of animal life from the minutest bioplasm up to the present stage of existence. Now we are studying the pages which deal with moral and spiritual laws. If any one wants to read any page over again he will do it. Just as in reading a book, if anybody feels particularly interested in any page or chapter he will read it over and over again and will not open a new page or a new chapter until he is perfectly satisfied with it. Similarly, in reading the book of life, if the individual soul likes any particular stage, he will stay there until he is perfectly satisfied with it; after that he will go forward and study other pages. One may read very slowly, and another very fast; but whether we read slowly or rapidly each one of us is bound to read the whole book of nature and attain to perfection sooner or later.

According to Vedanta, the end and aim of evolution is the attainment of perfection. Physical evolution of animal life reached its perfection in human form. There cannot be any other form higher than human on this earth under present conditions. It is the perfection of animal form. From this we can infer that the tendency of the law of evolution is to reach perfection. When it is attained to, the whole purpose is served. Do we see in nature any other higher form evolved out of the human body? No. Shall we not be justified if we say that the end of physical evolution is the attainment of the perfection of animal form? Again as the purpose and method of natural laws are uniform throughout the universe, the end of intellectual, moral and spiritual evolution will be attained when intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection are acquired. Intellectual perfection means perfection of intellect; and intellect is perfect when we understand the true nature of things and never mistake the unreal for the real, matter for spirit,

non-eternal for eternal, or *vice versa.* Moral perfection consists in the destruction of selfishness; and spiritual perfection is the manifestation of the true nature of spirit which is immortal, free, divine and one with the Universal Spirit or God. Evolution attains to the highest fulfilment of its purpose when the spirit manifests perfectly. The tendency of nature is to have perfect manifestation of all her powers. When certain powers predominate they manifest first while the others remain dormant. As we find in the process of evolution, when animal nature manifests perfectly the moral and spiritual nature remain latent. Again when moral and spiritual nature manifest fully, the animal is in abeyance. It is for this reason we do not find expressions of moral and spiritual nature in lower animals or in those human beings who live like them. Man is the only animal in whom such perfect expressions of moral and spiritual nature are possible.

When the individual soul begins to study its spiritual nature, its lower or animal nature is gradually eclipsed. As the higher nature becomes powerful the lower nature dwindles into insignificance; its energy is transformed into that of the higher nature, and ultimately it disappears altogether and rises no more. Then the soul becomes free from the lower or animal nature. There are many stages in the higher nature, as well as in the lower. Each of these stages binds the individual soul so long as it stays there. As it rises on a higher plane the lower stages disappear and cease to bind. But the moment that any individual, after passing through all the stages of the spiritual nature, reaches the ultimate point of perfection, he realizes his true nature which is immortal and divine. Then his true individuality manifests. For lack of true knowledge, he identified himself with each stage successively and thought that his individuality was one with the powers which were manifested in each stage. Consequently, he thought by mistake that he was affected by the changes of each stage. But now he realizes that his real individuality always remained unaffected. He sees that his true individuality shines always in the same manner, although the limiting adjuncts may vary. As the light of a lamp appears of different colours if it passes through glasses of different colours, so the light of the true individual appears as animal or human when it passes through the

animal or human nature of the subtle body. The subtle body of an individual changes from animal nature through moral and spiritual into divine. As this gradual growth cannot be expected in one life we shall have to admit the truth of reincarnation, which teaches gradual evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul through many lives and various forms. Otherwise the theory of evolution will remain imperfect, incomplete and purposeless. The doctrine of reincarnation differs from the accepted theory of evolution in admitting a gradual but continuous evolution of the subtle body through many gross forms. The gross body may appear or disappear, but the subtle body continues to exist even after the dissolution of the gross body and re-manifests itself in some other form.

The theory of reincarnation when properly understood will appear as a supplement to the theory of evolution. Without this most important supplement the evolution theory will never be complete and perfect. Evolution explains the process of life, while reincarnation explains the purpose of life. Therefore, both must go hand in hand to make the explanation satisfactory in every respect.

James Freeman Clarke says: "The man has come up to his present state of development by passing through lower forms, is the popular doctrine of science today. What is called evolution teaches that we have reached our present state by a very long and gradual ascent from the lowest animal organizations. It is true that the Darwinian theory takes no notice of the evolution of the soul, but only of the body. But it appears to me that a combination of the two views would remove many difficulties which still attach to the theory of natural selection and the survival of the fittest. If we are to believe in evolution let us have the assistance of the soul itself in this development of new species. Thus science and philosophy will co-operate, nor will poetry hesitate to lend her aid (*Ten Great Religions* II, p. 120). Evolution of the body depends upon the evolution of the germ of life or the individual soul. When these two are combined the explanation becomes perfect.

The theory of reincarnation is a logical necessity for the completion of the theory of evolution. If we admit a continuous evolution of a unit of the germ of life through many gross manifestations then we unconsciously accept the teach-

ings of the doctrine of reincarnation. In passing through different forms and manifestations the unit of life does not lose its identity or individuality. As an atom does not lose its identity or individuality (if you allow me to suppose an atom has a kind of individuality) although it passes from the mineral, through the vegetable, into the animal, so the germ of life always preserves its identity or individuality although it passes through the different stages of evolution.

Therefore, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, as in our ordinary life the individual soul passes from a baby body to a young one and from a young to an old, and carries with it all the impressions, ideas and experience that it has gathered in its former stage of existence and reproduces them in proper time, so when a man dies the individual soul passes from an old body into a new one, and takes with it the subtle body wherein are stored up all that it experienced and gathered during its past incarnations. Knowing this, wise men are never afraid of death. They know that death is nothing but a mere change from one body into another. Therefore, if any one does not succeed in conquering the lower nature by the higher, he will try again in his next incarnation after starting from the point which he reached in his past life. He will not begin again from the very beginning, but from the last stage at which he arrived. Thus we see that reincarnation is the logical sequence of evolution. It completes and makes perfect that theory and explains the cause of the moral and spiritual nature of man.

CHAPTER IV

WHICH IS SCIENTIFIC—RESURRECTION OR REINCARNATION

The students of history are interested to know where the idea of resurrection first arose and how it was adopted by other nations. If we read carefully the writings ascribed to Moses and other writers of the Old Testament we find that the ancient Israelites did not believe in the Christian heaven or hell, nor in reward or punishment after death. It is doubtful whether they had any clear conception of the existence of soul after the dissolution of the human body. They had no definite idea of the hereafter. They did not believe in the resurrection either of the soul or body. Job longed for death thinking that it would end his mental agony. In Psalms we read, "Wilt Thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise Thee?" (Ps. lxxxviii, 10.). "In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in the grave who shall give Thee thanks?" (Ps. vi, 5.). Again (Ps. cxlvi, 4) it is said about princes and the son of man,—"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day his thoughts perish." "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence" (Ps. cxv, 17.).

Solomon speaks boldly: "All things come alike to all; there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good and to the clean and to the unclean. . . as is the good, so is the sinner" (Eccl. ix, 2.). "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart. . . . Live joyfully with thy wife. . . . for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest" (Eccl. ix, 7, 9, 10.). Again in verse 5 it is said: "The dead know not anything, neither have they anymore a reward, for the memory of them is forgotten". Solomon says: "For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast". "All go into one place; all are of the dust

and all turn to dust again". "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Eccl. iii, 19-20.). There are many such passages which show clearly that before the Babylonian captivity the Israelites had no belief in reward or punishment, neither in heaven nor hell nor in the resurrection of the soul. Some say that they had a belief in a sheol or pit where departed souls remained after death, but were never resurrected. But when the ancient Jews were conquered by the Persians, 536 B.C., they came in contact with a nation which had developed a belief in one God, in a heaven and a hell, in the resurrection of the dead, in reward and punishment after death, and in the last day of judgement. Under the dominion of Persia, whose rule began with the capture of Babylon and lasted from 536-333 B.C., the Jews were greatly influenced by the Persian religion. They gave up their idolatry, gradually developed social organization and had considerable liberty. About that time the Jews were divided into two classes, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Those who adopted the religious ideas of the Parsees were called Pharisees (according to some authorities the word Pharisee was the Hebrew form of Parsee), and those who followed strictly the Jewish ideas, ceremonies, rituals and beliefs were called Sadducees. The former were sharply opposed to the latter in their doctrinal beliefs. They believed in angels and spirits, they expected the resurrection of the dead and believed in future reward and punishment and also in Divine preordination. The Sadducees did not step beyond the bounds of ancient Judaism. They were orthodox and very conservative in their views. They denied the existence of angels and spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and reward and punishment after death. In Matt. xxii, 23, we read: "The same day came to him the Sadducees which say that there is no resurrection". The Sadducees were fewer in number than the Pharisees. Gradually the latter grew very powerful and after the death of Jesus their doctrines of the resurrection of the dead, and of reward and punishment after death, and the belief in angels and spirits, became the cardinal principles of the new Christian sect.

Thus we see that the idea of resurrection first arose in Persia and afterwards took a prominent place in the writings

of the New Testament, and since then it has been largely accepted by the Christians of the Western countries. The Zoroastrians believed that the soul of the dead hovers about the body for three nights and does not depart for the other world until the dawn after the third night. Then the righteous go to heaven and the wicked to hell. There the wicked remain until the time of renovation of the universe, that is, the judgment day. After the renovation, when Ahriman or Satan is killed, the souls of the wicked will be purified and have everlasting progress.[1] The question was asked: "How shall they produce resurrection?" Ahura Mazda says: "The reply is this, that the preparation and production of the resurrection are an achievement connected with miracle, a sublimity, and afterwards also a wondrous appearance unto the creatures uninformed. The secrets and affairs of the persistent Creator are like every mystery and secret."[2]

The Zoroastrians believed in the resurrection, not of the physical body, but of the soul, and that it was an act of miracle. Similarly miraculous was the resurrection of Jesus. Although Jesus Himself never mentioned what kind of resurrection, whether of body or of soul that He meant and believed in, the interpretation of the writers of the Gospels shows that His disciples understood Him to mean bodily resurrection and the re-appearance of His physical form. The three days remained, just as the Zoroastrians believed. The miraculous and wondous appearance of Jesus before His disciples was preached most vigorously by Paul. In his Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul declares emphatically that the whole of the Christian religion depends upon the miraculous resurrection and re-appearance of Jesus. Although Paul said the spiritual body of the risen dead is not the same as flesh and blood body (1 Cor., xv), still that important point is generally overlooked, and the result is the belief which we find amongst some of the Christian sects; that at the call of the angels, the body will rise from the grave and the mouldering dust of bones and flesh will be put together by the miraculous power of the Almighty God. Paul says: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Cor., xv, 20.). He preached that Christ was

[1] *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. xvii, pp. 27, 34, 46.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 80.

the first born from the dead, that those who believed in Christ would rise as He did and that those who would not believe in Him or in His resurrection should not rise.

We have already noticed that the Parsees believed in a miraculous resurrection; that the same miracle became more definite in the case of Jesus; and that the Christian faith was afterwards founded upon that miraculous event. Both the Parsees and the followers of Christ did not mean by resurrection any universal law, but a miracle done by certain super-natural powers. They did not give any scientific reasons for such a miracle.

But modern science denies miracles. It teaches that this universe is guided, not by miracles as the old thinkers used to believe, but by definite laws which are always consistent and universal. There cannot be any exception to those laws which are uniform throughout. If resurrection be one of those laws, then it must have existed before the birth of Jesus; as such, how could He be the first born from the dead, as described by Paul. Conversely, if Jesus was the first who rose from the dead, then resurrection cannot be a universal law. Scientists would not believe in anything which is not based upon universal laws. Some of the agnostics and materialists have gone so far as to say that Jesus did not die on the cross, but his animation was suspended when his body was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathæa. When Joseph went to Pilate and craved the body of Jesus, Pilate marvelled if He were dead (Mark xv, 44), because it was only six hours after the crucifixion. Some of the modern physiologists are of opinion that temperate and strong men might live for several days on the cross. These heretical agnostics and skeptical scientists say that the body of Jesus revived after a few hours in the cool, rock-cut tomb, that he walked out of the tomb, went to Galilee and appeared before his disciples.[1] Whatever the facts may be (nobody can now tell exactly what actually happened), it is clear that the scientists are not ready to take anything upon authority. They do not care to believe in anything because it is written in this book or that. They must have convincing proofs and a rational explanation of every phenomenon of nature. They want to

[1] Vide *Science and Christian Tradition* by Prof. Huxley, pp. 279-280.

penetrate into miracles in order to discover the universal laws that govern them. If they do not find any such laws, they will surely reject every event that is supposed to be caused by miraculous or supernatural powers.

The theory of a miraculous resurrection is attended with the belief that the individual soul does not exist before birth. The supporters of this theory hold that at the time of birth, the individual, being created out of nothing, comes fresh into existence. But science tells us that sudden creation out of nothing and a total destruction of anything are both impossible. Matter and force are indestructible. Science teaches evolution and not creation, and denies the intervention of any supernatural being as the cause of phenomenal changes. The theory of resurrection ignores all these ultimate conclusions of modern science. On the contrary, the doctrine of reincarnation, after accepting all the truths and laws of nature that have been discovered by modern science, carries them to their proper logical conclusions. Reincarnation is based upon evolution. It means a continuous evolution of an individual germ of life, and a gradual re-manifestation of all the powers and forces that exist in it potentially. Moreover, the doctrine of reincarnation is founded on the law of cause and effect. It teaches that the cause is not outside of the effect, but lies in the effect. The cause is the potential or unmanifested state of the effect, and effect is the actual or manifested cause. There is one current of infinite force or power constantly flowing in the ocean of reality of the universe, and appearing in the innumerable forms of waves. We call one set of waves the cause of another set but in fact that which is the cause is the potentiality of the future effect and the actuality or a previous potential cause. The underlying current is one and the same throughout.

Reincarnation denies the idea that the soul has come into existence all of a sudden or has been created for the first time, but it holds that it has been existing from the beginningless past, and will exist all through eternity. The individual soul enjoys or suffers according to the acts it performs. All enjoyment and suffering are but the reactions of our action. Actions are the causes and the reactions are the results. Our present life is the result of our past actions, and our future will be the result of the present. The actions which we are now doing

will not be lost. Do you think that the thought-forces of one life-time will end suddenly after death? No. They will be conserved and remain potentially in the center and re-manifest under suitable conditions. Each human soul is nothing but a center of thought-force. This center is called in Sanskrit *sukshma Sharira* or the subtle body of an individual. The subtle germ of life or, in other words, the invisible center of thought-forces, will manufacture a physical vehicle for expressing the latent powers that are ready for manifestation. This process will continue until the germ can express most perfectly all the powers that are coiled up in its invisible form. As the doctrine of reincarnation is in agreement with all the physical laws, so it is based upon psychical, moral and ethical laws. As on the objective plane the law of action and reaction governs the objective phenomena, so on the subjective plane of consciousness, if the mental action or thought be good, the reaction will be good, and the reaction will be evil if the mental action be evil, because every action produces a similar reaction. A good reaction is one which makes us happy and brings pleasant sensations or peace of mind, while an evil reaction brings suffering, unpleasant sensations, and makes one miserable. Thus reincarnation makes us free agents for action, as well as for reaping the results or reactions of those actions. In fact, we mould our own nature, according to our desires, tendencies and works.

The theory of resurrection, as commonly understood, does not explain why one man is born with a sinful nature and another with a virtuous one. It contents itself with saying as Luther said: "Man is a beast of burden who only moves as his rider orders; sometimes God rides him and sometimes Satan." But why God should allow Satan to ride His own creature nobody can tell. At any rate, man must suffer eternally for the crimes which he is forced by Satan to commit. Moreover this theory pre-supposes predestination and that the individual soul is foredoomed to go either to heaven or to hell. St. Augustine first started this doctrine of predestination and grace to explain why one is born sinful and another sinless. According to this theory, God, the merciful, favours somebody with His grace at the time of his birth and then he comes into this world ready to be saved, but the mass of humanity is born sinful and destined for eternal damnation.

Very few indeed receive the gift of grace and are predestined to be saved. Moreover, this doctrine tells us that God creates man out of nothing, forbids him something, but at the same time He does not give him the power to obey His commands. Ultimately, God punishes him with eternal torture on account of his weakness. The body and soul will not be separated. He will not be set free from his body, because, if it be so, there will be the end of his suffering, which God does not like. All these sufferings and punishments are predestined before his birth. Thus, St. Augustine's dogma of predestination and grace instead of explaining the difficulty satisfactorily brings horror and dread to human minds, while the doctrine of reincarnation teaches gradual progress from lower to higher, through ages until the individual reaches perfection. It holds that each individual will become perfect like Jesus or Buddha or like the Father in heaven and manifest divinity either in this life or in some other. One span of life is too short for developing one's powers to perfection. If you should try to train an idiot to become a great artist or a philosopher, would you ever succeed in your attempt to make him so during his lifetime ? No. And will you punish him because he cannot become so ? Can a man who possesses the slightest common sense be so unreasonable ? Similarly what would you think if God punishes a man, because he cannot become perfect within a lifetime? It is a poor argument to say that God has given us free-will to choose between right and wrong, and we are responsible for our choice ; if we choose wrongly we must be punished. The advocates of such an argument forget that at the same time God has let loose His powerful Satan to corrupt His creatures.

It reminds me of an old story. Once on a time at a certain place a prisoner was released and set free through the kindness of a tyrant. The tyrant said to the prisoner: 'Look here, wicked man, I give you freedom, you can go to any place ; but there is one condition ; if you are attacked by any wild animal you will be put in the dungeon and there will be no end to your torture'. So saying, he gave him freedom, but at the same time ordered his servants to let loose a hungry wolf to chase the man. You can imagine what became of the prisoner. Can we call this an act of mercy!

The doctrine of reincarnation says that each individual

soul is potentially perfect and is gradually unfolding its powers and making them actual through the process of evolution. At every step of that process it is gaining different experiences which last only for a time. Therefore, neither God nor Satan is responsible for our good or evil actions. Good and evil are like the up and down or the crest and hollow of a wave in the sea. A wave cannot rise without making a hollow somewhere in the sea. So in the infinite ocean of reality innumerable waves are constantly rising. The summit of each wave is called good, while the hollow beside it is evil or misery and the current of each individual life is constantly flowing towards the ultimate destination which we call perfection. Who can tell how long it will take to reach that goal? If anybody can attain to perfection in this life, he is no longer bound to reincarnate. If he fails he will continue to progress by taking some other body. Reincarnation does not teach, as many people think, that in the next incarnation one will begin from the very beginning, but it says that one will start from that point which one reaches before death and will keep the thread of progress unbroken. It does not teach that we go back to animal bodies after death, but that we get our bodies according to our desires, tendencies and powers. If any person has no desire to come back to this world or to any other and does not want to enjoy any particular object of pleasure, and if he is perfectly free from selfishness that person, will not have to come back. The theory of reincarnation is logical and satisfactory. While the theory of resurrection is neither based on scientific truths nor can it logically explain the cause of life and death, reincarnation solves all the problems of life and explains scientifically all the questions and doubts that arise in the human mind. It has been said: "Reincarnation is not easily understood by a thoughtless child deluded by the delusion of wealth, name or fame. Everything ends with death, he thinks, and thus falls again and again under the sway of death".

CHAPTER V

THEORY OF TRANSMIGRATION

The theory of transmigration is one of the oldest theories accepted by the people of the Orient to solve the problems concerning life and death as well as to explain the continuity of existence after death. This theory presupposes the existence of the soul as an entity which can live even when the gross material body is dead or dissolved into its elements. Those who deny the existence of the soul, of the self-conscious thinker and actor, as an entity distinct from the gross material body, necessarily deny this theory of transmigration. The materialistic thinkers of all ages have refused to accept this theory, because they do not admit the existence of a soul or a self-conscious thinker and actor as an entity, separate from the gross material body. Consequently, they do not ask or discuss whether the soul will exist after death or not, whether it will continue to live or not. Such materialists are not the creatures of the twentieth century, but they have lived in all ages, in all countries. In India and in other civilized countries of ancient times, you will find that materialistic thinkers prevailed and they gave the same arguments which we hear now from the agnostics and scientists of to-day. Their arguments are generally one-sided and unsatisfactory. They try to deduce the soul or self-conscious entity from the combination of matter or material forces, but they have not succeeded in giving a scientific proof of it. No arguments in favour of the existence of a soul as an entity will convince them, because they deny the existence of anything that cannot be perceived by sense powers. If we could bring the soul down on the sense plane and make it visible to these materialistic thinkers, and if they could make experiments upon it, then perhaps they would be convinced to a certain extent, but not until then. But how can we bring the soul down on the sense plane when it is ethereal and finer than anything that we can perceive with our senses?

Those who try to explain the cause of our earthly life by the theory of heredity, do not believe in the truth of transmigra-

tion. The modern scientists, agnostics and materialists generally accept the theory of heredity and endeavour to explain everything by it; but if we examine their arguments for the theory of heredity, we shall find that the theory of transmigration is much more satisfactory, much more rational than that of heredity.

Among the followers of the great religions of the world, the majority of Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and Parsees deny the truth of transmigration. Of course, there was a time when the Christians believed in this transmigration theory. Origen and other Church Fathers accepted it until the time of Justinian, who anathematized all those who believed in reincarnation or the pre-existence of the soul. Among the Jews we find that in the Cabala this idea of transmigration plays the most important part. In fact the Cabalists accepted this theory to explain all the difficulties that could not be explained by any other theory. But those Jews, Christians, Mohammedans and Parsees who do not believe in the theory of transmigration accept the one-birth theory; that is, that God creates the souls at the time of birth out of nothing, and these souls, having come into existence out of nothing, continue to live forever; that this is our first and last birth that we receive; we did not exist before, we are suddenly created by God, and after death each one of us will continue to live either in heaven or hell to enjoy or to suffer throughout eternity. Among the modern spiritualists, we find that those who are born and brought up with this idea of one birth do not accept the thory of transmigration. Still there are millions and millions of people all over the world who do believe in transmigration and who have found comfort and consolation in their lives as well as a satisfactory solution of the problems of life and death.

The theory of transmigration, or metempsychosis, as it has been called by many philosophers, originally meant the passing of a soul from one body after death into another; or, in other words, it meant that the soul after dwelling in one particular body for a certain length of time leaves it at the time of death, and in order to gain experience enters into some other body, either human, animal or angelic, which is ready to receive it. It may migrate from the human body to an angelic body and then come down on the human plane, or to the animal plane

and be born again as an animal. So the original meaning of transmigration or metempsychosis was the revolution of the soul from body to body whether animal, human, angelic or of the gods. The migrating substance being a fixed quantity, with fixed qualities, chooses its form according to its taste, desire and bent of character. This idea prevailed among the ancient Egyptians, according to whom the soul, after leaving the dead body, would travel from one body to another for thousands and thousands of years in order to gain experiences in each of the different stages of life.

Among the Greek philosophers, we find that Pythagoras, Plato and their followers believed in this theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls. Pythagoras says: "After death the rational mind, having been freed from the chains of the body, assumes an ethereal vehicle and passes into the region of the dead where it remains till it is sent back to this world to inhabit some other body human or animal. After undergoing successive purgations, when it is sufficiently purified, it is received among the gods and returns to the eternal source from which it first proceeded". Plato also believed in this theory. Of course we cannot tell exactly from whence Pythagoras and Plato got these ideas. Some say that they learned these doctrines from Egypt; others believe that, either directly or indirectly, they learned the theory of tranmsigation from India. Plato describes in *'Phædrus,'* in mythological language, why and how the souls take their birth upon this plane, either as human or animal. He says: "In the heaven Zeus, the Father and Lord of all creatures, drives his winged car, ordering all things and superintending them. A host of deities and spirits follows him, each fulfilling his own function. Whoever will and can follow them. After taking this round, they advance by a steep course along the inner circumference of the heavenly vault and proceed to a banquet. The chariots of the gods, being well balanced and well driven, advance easily; others with difficulty for the vicious horse, unless the charioteer has thorougly broken him, weighs down the car by his proclivity towards the earth, whereupon the soul is put to the extremity of toil and effort. The souls of gods reach the summit, go outside and stand upon the surface of heaven, and enjoy celestial bliss. Such is the life of the gods; other souls which follow God best and are likest to Him

succeed in seeing the vision of truth and in entering into the outer world with great difficulty. The rest of the souls longing after the upper world all follow; but not being strong enough, they are carried round in the deep below, plunging, treading on one another, striving to be first, and there, in confusion and extremity of effort, many of them are lamed and have their wings broken. Thus when the soul is unable to follow and fails to behold the vision of Truth, sinks beneath the double load of forgetfulness and vice, her feathers fall from her and she drops to earth and is born again and again as human beings or as animals". Plato says: "Ten thousand years must elapse before the soul can return to the place from whence she came, for she cannot grow her wings in less". "At the end of the first thousand years, the souls of the good and of the evil kind come together to draw lots, and choose their bodies according to their tendencies and the bent of their characters. They may take any they like". Instead of receiving the natural consequences of their deeds and misdeeds of their previous lives they are allowed to choose their own lot, according to their experience and bent of character. "Some being disgusted with mankind, prefer to be born as animals, such as lions and eagles or some other animals. Others delight in trying their luck as human beings". From this mythological description we gather what Pato meant by transmigration.

This Platonic idea of transmigration or of successive lives of those who inhabit this earth has been criticized by various thinkers of modern times; and referring to this idea the late Doctor Myers, of the Psychical Research Society of London, writes in his second volume of *Human Personality*: "The simple fact that such was probably the opinion of both Plato and Virgil shows that there is nothing here which is alien to the best reason or to the highest instincts of men. Nor, indeed, is it easy to realize any theory of the *direct creation* of spirits at such different stages of advancement as those which enter upon the earth in the guise of mortal man. There *must*, one feels, be some kind of continuity—some form of spiritual past" (p. 134). Why does He not create all souls equal? Why will one soul be highly advanced spiritually while another is entirely ignorant and idiotic? This question cannot be answered, this problem cannot be solved by the special creation theory, and,

therefore, Doctor Myers says that there is no doubt that there was some previous continuity or spiritual past of each individual soul, and therefore he tacitly admits the theory of transmigration. Although from a scientific viewpoint he could not give any direct proof regarding this idea of a pre-existence of the soul, still he could not deny it entirely when he said: "The shaping forces which have made our bodies and our minds what they are may always have been psychical forces—from the first living slime-speck to the complex intelligences of to-day". "The old transmigrationist's view would thus posses a share of truth and the actual man would be the resultant not only of intermingling heredities on father's and mother's sides, but of intermingling heredities, one of planetary and one of cosmic scope." (*Human Personality,* Vol. II. p. 267).

But this theory of transmigration, as described by Plato, is a little different from a similar theory which existed in India before his time. In the Platonic idea of transmigration, as we have already seen, the souls were allowed to choose their own lot according to their experience or bent of character, but not to receive the natural consequence of their deeds and misdeeds. Plato did not say anything about the law which governs souls; but in ancient India the great thinkers and philosophers explained that each individual soul is bound by the inexorable law of nature to receive its body as a natural consequence of its former deeds and misdeeds, and not to have free choice of its lot according to its bent of character. The great thinkers and philosophers of ancient India discovered the universal law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, and called it by the Sanskrit term 'karma', which means the law of cause and sequence; that every cause must be followed by an effect of a similar nature, that every action must produce similar reaction, and conversely every reaction or effect is the result of an action or cause of a similar character. Thus there is always a balance and harmony between cause and effect, between action and reaction. This law of *karma* has now become a fundamental verity of modern scienec. It is called by different names: the scientists call it the law of causation the law of compensation, the law of retribution, the law of action and reaction, but they all refer to the same idea,—that every cause must produce a similar result and every action must produce a similar reaction.

Now these ancient thinkers of India applied this law of *karma* to explain the destiny of human souls, and it was upon this law they based the theory of transmigration. They maintained that human souls are bound by this irresistible law and cannot get out of it; their thoughts and deeds are the causes which produce results of similar nature. So their future birth does not depend upon their whimsical, free choice, but it is limited by the thoughts and deeds or misdeeds of their previous lives. In the Platonic idea, we find that the souls go according to their choice. They may not take a human form if they prefer an animal form, but in the Hindu idea of transmigration we find that it is not a result of free choice, but, if our thoughts and deeds force us to take a particular form, then we are subject to the law of *karma,* which governs our future birth and the evolution of our souls. Consequently, the Hindu theory of transmigration differs fundamentally from the Platonic as well as from the Egyptian idea of transmigration. In the Platonic and Egyptain theories, we see that the souls, after leaving the body, enter into another body which is waiting to receive the migrating soul, but in the Hindu theory of transmigration the body is not waiting to receive the migrating soul, but on the contrary the soul, being subject to the laws of evolution, manufactures the gross material body according to its desires and tendencies. Just as a germ of life will develop a grosser form by cellular subdivision, by growth, and by assimilation of the environmental conditions, so the germ of the human soul will manufacure the body by obeying the laws which govern the physical plane. Parents are nothing but the channels through which the migrating souls receive their material forms. Parents do not create the souls; they have no power to create. They can only give the suitable environments necessary for manufacturing a gross physical body. The souls come with their tendencies, with their desires, and they remain as germs of life.

Now these germs of life contain vital forces, some powers, psychic powers, and ethereal particles of matter. At the time of death, the soul contracts and withdraws all its powers from the sense organs to its innermost center, and in that contracted state it leaves the body. But these powers do not leave the soul. By the law of persistence of force and conservation of

energy they remain latent in that centre until environmental conditions become favourable for their remanifestation. Rebirth means the manifestation of the latent powers which exist in the germ of life or in the individual soul. These germs of life are called by different names. Leibnitz called them monads and modern scientists call them bioplasms or some such name, but the Vedanta philosophers describe them as subtle bodies. These germs or subtle bodies are subject to evolution and growth; they arise from lower to higher stages of development, from the mineral through the vegetable to the animal kingdom and eventually they become human beings and then they go on progressing.

In the Platonic theory, the idea of progress, growth or gradual evolution of the soul from the lower to higher stages of existence is entirely excluded, because, as I have already said, the migrating substance is of a fixed quantity with fixed qualities, that is, these qualities do not change and are not affected by either growth or evolution. They are constant quantities. In order to differentiate these two ideas we should call the Hindu theory of transmigration by the term 'reincarnation'. The Hindu or vedantic theory of reincarnation however, is not the same as the Buddhistic theory of rebirth, for the Buddhists do not believe in the permanence of the soul entity. There is another point where the reincarnation theory differs from Platonic transmigration. According to this theory of reincarnation, there is growth and evolution of each individual soul from the lower to higher stages of development. The soul or germ of life. after passing through the lower stages, comes to the human plane and gains experience and knowledge; and after coming to the human plane, it does not retrograde to animal bodies. The Platonic theory teaches that human souls migrate into animal bodies or angelic bodies and return from the angelic to the human or the animal, and that some of them prefer to become animals; while the theory of reincarnation, taking its stand upon the scientific truth of gradual evolution, teaches that the human souls have already passed through different grades of the animal, nay, of the vegetable kingdom, by the natural process of evolution. After having once received the human organism, why should a soul choose to go back to the lesser and more imperfect organism of an animal? How

is it possible for a lesser manifestation to hold a greater one? Why should a greater manifestation choose more limited forms in preference to those of others? This question arises in the Platonic theory of transmigration. Therefore, the reincarnation theory, or the theory of transmigration according to the Hindus, rejects this idea of the going back of human souls to animal forms. We have already passed in the evolutionary process through the lower grade of animal organisms. Now that we have outgrown them, why should we go back to them?

It is true, however, that in India there are many uneducated people among the Hindus who believe that human souls do migrate into animal bodies after death to gain experience and reap the results of their wicked deeds, being bound by the law of *karma,* but in the Platonic theory the law of *karma* plays no part in the transmigration of souls. The educated and thoughtful minds of India, however, accept the more rational and scientific theory of reincarnation. Although there are passages in the scriptural writings of the Hindus which apparently refer to the retrogression of the human soul into animal nature, still such passages do not necessarily mean that the souls will be obliged to take animal bodies. They may live like animals even when they have human bodies, as we may find among us many people like cats and dogs and snakes in human form and they are often more vicious than natural cats, dogs or snakes. They are reaping their own karma and manifesting their animal nature, though physically they look like human beings. This kind of retrogression is possible for one who after reaching the human plane goes backward on account of wicked thoughts and deeds on the animal plane. Such a temporary retrogression brings knowledge and helps it in its onward progress towards the manifestation of higher powers on the higher plane of consciousness. All the wicked thoughts and wicked deeds are nothing but the results of our own mistakes. What is sin? Sin is nothing but a mistake and it proceeds from ignorance. For instance, if I do not know that fire burns, I may put my finger into it and get burned. The result of this mistake is the burning of the finger and this has taught me once for all that fire burns; I shall never again put my finger into fire. So every mistake is a great teacher in the long run. No one is born so high and perfect as not to commit any

mistake or any sin. Every mistake like this opens our eyes to the laws of the universe by bringing to us such results as we do not desire. As one life is not enough to gain experience in all the stages of evolution, we must have to admit the doctrine of the reincarnation of the soul for the fulfillment of the ultimate purpose of earthly life. Professor Huxley says: "None but hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality".

DOCTRINE OF KARMA

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ॥
तस्मादसक्तः सततं कार्यं कर्म समाचर ।
असक्तो ह्याचरन् कर्म परमाप्नोति पुरुषः ॥

No one can remain absolutely inactive even for a moment. Propelled by the power of nature, one is forced to work. Therefore, do thou always perform actions which are obligatory, without attachment; by performing action without attachment, one attains to the highest.

—*Bhagavad Gita*, III, 5 & 19.

"The doctrine of karma alone can explain the mysterious problem of good and evil and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life.

Any action that is not done through the attachment to the result of action, is for the purification of the soul, and as soon as the soul is purified the knowledge comes and the law of karma ceases to exist; that is, the law of karma is transcendented. Thus one goes beyond that law. The Karma Yoga teaches that by performing all the obligatory works, without seeking any return for the individual, that is, through non-attachment, we gain the purification of the heart, and when the purification of the heart comes, it reflects the Divine wisdom, and that Divine wisdom kindles the fire of knowledge, which burns out all the karma, good or bad, and the individual soul becomes absolutely free. That is the goal of Karma Yoga."

—Swami Abhedananda

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Law of Causation

The phenomena of the world are linked together in the chain of cause of effect—Everything has a definite cause behind it—The law of cause and effect is the most universal of all laws—It is the only law which governs all phenomena—Every event is the effect of some invisible force—The illustration of the murder of the Austrian Archduke in the Great World War I—One event can be both a cause and effect—Every action is conditioned by the law of causation—The law of *karma*—The word *karma* includes both the cause and the effect—Under the sway of law of *karma*, there is no room left for a chance or accident—Chance or accident is the product of some unknown but definite causes—It is an outcome of the unscientific mind and ignorance—Everything is governed by the law of causation—What do we mean by the terms good, evil and mixed—It is impossible to find and action absolutely good or evil—Works are followed by their defects and demerits.

CHAPTER II

Law of Action and Reaction

'Law of causation' includes the law that the like produces the like—All the mental activities determine the character of the individual ego—Each character or personality is the grand total result of previous mental action—Each effect is latent in the cause and *vice versa*—It is our own *karma* that produces joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain—Our present character is determined by the past—Neither God nor Satan is responsible for our pleasure or pain—No room left for the hypothesis of predestination and grace—What do they signify—A believer in the law of *karma* is a free agent—Reward and punishment, given by God, are nothing but the reactions of our own mental

and physical actions—The doctrine of *karma* denies the arbitrary Ruler—God never rewards the virtuous nor punishes the wicked.

CHAPTER III

Law of Compensation

The doctrine of *karma* includes the 'law of compensation' and the 'law of retribution'—There is a counter balance between a cause and its effect—All the laws of *karma* work together—There is neither increase nor decrease anywhere—There same 'law of compensation' manifests itself in all the planes, mental, intellectual and moral with equal regularity—There cannot be bargaining in the realm of nature—The law of compensation governs both the sentient and the insentient—No man can defy it—A man may reap the result of compensation for his work either in this life or after—Pre-existence and reincarnation of the soul cannot be denied—Justice and compensation at every step of the eternal life—The law of compensation covers the whole chain of our individual lives—The widest view of the soul-life really brings the perfect balance of causes and effects.

CHAPTER IV

Law of Retribution

Every good act brings its own reward by the law of compensation—Evil act brings its own punishment by the law of retribution—Action and reaction are like the flower and its fruit—The law of retribution brings its reward first in the inner nature, and then in the external—Virtue, wisdom, truth and love proceed from God—They are spiritual qualities—Virtue and vice are produced by people's own thoughts and deeds—The sayings of Emerson and St. Bernard—Hindus believe not in the hell-fire doctrine—They believe in the eternal law of *karma*—What the Buddhists do—The difference between the Buddhistic and Vedantic interpretation of the doctrine of *karma*—The *karmas, sanchita, prarabdha, kriyamana* and *agami*—The same idea was conveyed by St. Paul—Christ also referred to it—Heredity

cannot unevil the mystery of good and evil—The opinion of the theologians about it—What the Vedanta explains—The doctrine of *karma* can explain the problems of good and evil—It predestines nothing or no one—It shows the way out of the world—It is the solace to men in their world of woe and misery.

CHAPTER V

Philosophy of Karma

Philosophy of work is called *Karma Yoga*—Three other paths—The characteristics of the choosers of these paths—*Karma Yoga* means dexterity in work—What the *Bhagavad Gita* says of it—Five essential conditions for mental or physical labour—They are of three kinds—There cannot be absolute rest of body or mind—The practice of philosophy of work makes us rise above all laws—There is one thing unmoved amidst the unceasing movement the *Karma Yoga* explains it—*Atman,* the Knower is beyond all activities—A higher discrimination is necessary to realize the Knower—What is meant by the terms, changeable and unchangeable—What do the 'time' and 'space' mean—The identification of the Knower with the body and mind is due to our imperfect knowledge—Three kinds of knowledge—The scientific explanation of the five objects of knowledge—The undercurrent of the primordial energy correlates all the phenomena—The knowledge of oneness is realized by inevitably arriving at the eternal energy—How the men of limited knowledge live—Training of mind is necessary first—Perfection through work comes when the *Atman* is realized—The body is not an end of life—Wise men work ceaselessly seeking no return of their work—The passionate are unhappy—True workers obtain unbounded happiness.

CHAPTER VI

Secret of Karma

This world is a stage—Each without exception plays his role—Life is a drama—Men pass from one role to another—The cause of the world-play is not outside—It is the latent

powers that are slumbering in each human soul—This latent or dormant state is called *tamas*—It can be better examined in deep sleep—It wakes up as a mental activity—Each germ of life possesses infinite potentialities—The stages of evolution—The first glimmering of it is in the lower animals—It reaches its climax in a human being—It is then called *rajas*—Every action has three states—We are impelled by our inner nature—The character of action and reaction must be the same—By the wheel of action and reaction each individual soul is led from one point to another—What the scriptures say about the law of causation—The soul is not created for nature—The witness-like self is beyond nature and its laws—The causes of our action are the motives within—Motives all proceed from selfishness—In India every individual life is divided into four periods—Selfishness is the result of ignorance—The wise ones never make the mistake—A man who knows the secret of work work's for work's sake.

CHAPTER VII

Duty or Motive in Karma

Activity of mind and body is the condition of life—Activity can be divided into three classes—How the moral nature awakens in a man—There can be no absolute standard of duty for all—Life is divided into different stages—Each stage has its obligations—The sense of duty is a kind of bondage—The mere fulfilment of duty in itself cannot produce any good results—What is the real duty of life—What the Bible, Quran, and the Zend-Avesta say about it—The word 'duty' is an abstract term—Any action which directs us Godward is good—To be unselfish is our sole duty—The way of rising above the narrow self—The examples of Jesus the Christ and Buddha—The climax of unselfishness is identical with divine love—The love or feeling of oneness makes a man rise above all duties—Wherever there is true love, there is freedom—Duty is seldom sweet when not accompanied by love—The final end of duty is freedom and divine love—Divine love and wisdom lead to Godconsciousness—Sorrow and suffering etc. exist where the idea of duality prevails—Realization of oneness with God is the highest aim of

the doctrine of *karma*—Bound *by* the law of *karma* each individual is playing his part—The present life is the result of our past and the future must be the result of our present—The cause is inherent in the effect, and the effect in the cause. Absolute freedom is the ultimate purpose of every human life —All work done through selfish motives is the cause of bondage—The debt which we owe to the higher self can be paid by realizing our true nature—We should no longer work through attachment to the fruits of our labour—The one universal Energy is manifest through the universe—The moment we realize ourselves one with the universal body of Energy we make ourselves free from the bondage of ignorance—Freedom is attained by cutting ourselves loose from the chain of cause and sequence.

APPENDIX A

Delusion

Delusion does not mean non-existence—It means relative reality—It has no permanent existence—It is like a mirage—It is more like a dream—An awakening from the state of dream means superconsciousness—Truth is the background of all—We see only the appearance of Truth—An example of a table and colour—Our appearances of qualities only change, not the Truth—Delusion is a false knowledge—It is indiscrimination or undifferentiated consciousness—Truth is within us—The better knowledge or realization illumines the delusion—Spirit is never sick—Delusion is a kind of perplexing problem—We should go through it and transcend it.

APPENDIX B

Heart and Mind

Heart refers to the mind or feeling—The mind includes a lot of other activities and functions—The heart and the mind are not the same thing according to Vedanta philosophy—They are same according to the Christian Science and New Thought —What psychology says—We call the heart *chitta*—Impressions

are the causes of future desires—The mind is like a mirror—Impressions will not die out unless they are forced out—Impressions remain in the subconscious mind—Habit is a series of impressions—Impressions are obstacles in the path of realization—Purification of the heart is necessary—Purification of the heart means removal of the *samskaras* from it—We can reduce the number of desires by discrimination.

CHAPTER I

LAW OF CAUSATION

सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः

Works are always followed by their defects and demerits just as the fire is enveloped with smokes.

—*Bhagavad Gita, XVIII, 48.*

A careful study of nature reveals to us that the prenomena of the world are linked together in the universal chain of cause and effect. No event can occur without having a definite cause behind it. Whatever we see, hear or perceive with our senses is but the effect of some cause whether known or unknown. To trace the causes of events and to become familiar with the conditions under which an effect is produced, have always been the air of the various branches of science and philosophy.

All science and all philosophies of the world unanimously declare that the law of cause and effect is the most universal of all laws. It is the one law which governs all phenomena however gross or fine they may be. All the forces of nature whether physical or mental, obey this law and can never transcend it. From the vibrations of electrons to the revolution of the earth round the sun, from the falling of an apple on the ground to the raising of an arm by the will-power, every event is the effect of some invisible force, working in harmony with the law of causation.

Similarly, every action of our body or mind is the result of some force or power which is its cause; but at the same time that which is the effect of some cause, becomes in turn the cause of some grosser result, and that again produces some other still grosser effect, and that again a finer one, and so on and on the chain of cause and effect continues to spread without stopping anywhere, without coming to an absolute end. For instance, a murderer shoots the Austrian Archduke and drives

a bullet into his body and the Archduke dies of blood-poisoning. Here, shooting is an action which is the effect of the mental and physical activities of the murderer. But the same action is again the cause of driving the bullet in the Archduke's body; this is the cause of the wound, which brings fever and other organic disorder, which results in his death. The death of the Archduke causes his wife to become a widow which produces changes in her life and in her whole family. The effect of this single act of murder did not stop here. It brought on the European war and caused destruction of life and property of millions and affected the whole world. It is needless to describe the horrors of the last war.[1] The German Emperor lost his throne and empire. The Czar was assassinated. People are still reaping the effects of this war which will last for generations to come. Furthermore, it reacted upon the murderer, brought to him incalculable misery and untimely death. It left an impression upon his mind which he carried with him and perhaps his suffering will continue even after his death in another life.

Thus, we can see, how one event can be both a cause and an effect at the same time, and how it can affect the whole world producing various kinds of effects on the plane of the living as also on that of the dead. From this endless chain of cause and effect, we can neither separate one single link nor call it useless or unnecessary. In the same manner, it can be shown that every action, however minute or trivial, it may appear to us, being conditioned by the universal law of causation, produces different effects visible and invisible and affects the whole world of phenomena either directly or indirectly. No action can escape this law, that every cause must be followed by an effect, that every action is bound to react upon the actor with similar force and effect.

This universal law of causation is called in Sanskrit the law of *karma*. The word *karma* is now almost naturalized into English. It comes from the root *kri* 'to act' and means action, or deed. Any action, physical or mental, is called *karma;* and as every action is bound to produce its reaction or result it is also *karma*. Moreover, secondarily as an action

[1] The first World War.

is both a cause and an effect at the same time, the word *karma* includes both the cause and the effect. In this universal sense, motion, attraction, gravitation, repulsion, moving, walking, talking, seeing, hearing, thinking, willing and desiring, nay, all the actions of body, mind and sense are all *karma*. They produce results being governed by the irresistible law of causation.

Under the sway of this all-pervading law of *karma*, there is no room left for a chance or accident. What we call happening by chance or accidental, is in reality the product of some definite causes which we may not know or cannot trace on account of our limited knowledge. The causes might be on the moral or spiritual planes, but we seek only on the physical plane. In ancient times, when the range of the known causes was extremely limited, the uncultured people used to explain the accidental event or events, produced by unknown causes, by attributing them to some supernatural powers or agencies. Even today there are many who believe in accidents. Gradually, when all the supernatural powers were unified into one personal God, the effects of unknown causes were called Providential. But, in reality, all accidents have natural causes whether we know them or not. That which appears to be supernatural or Providential to an unscientific mind, is natural to a scientist or a philosopher, whose conception of nature is larger and more universal. Therefore, all chance-events or so-called accidental occurrences are just as much governed by the law of causation or *karma* as any ordinary result of some known cause.

The results of the various causes of nature can be classified as *good, evil* and *mixed*. That which fulfils our interest and is beneficial to us under certain conditions, is called *good;* and that which injures us in any way, is called *evil*. The *mixed* results are those which are partly beneficial or helpful and partly injurious. These three kinds of results determine the nature of actions or causes. If the result is good or, in other words, if we see any action producing an effect which is either beneficial to oneself or to one's neighbours physically, morally or spiritually without injuring any living creature mentally or physically or in any other manner, it is called *good;* while that action is *evil* which destroys the interest of oneself or of one's neighbours and brings suffering,

sorrow, misery to the individual worker or to other members of the society. The *mixed* results are those which serve the interest of some, bringing happiness to one or many, but at the same time they produce evil in some other quarters. In short, actions which produce good at the expense of the interest or rights of others, are called the causes of *mixed* results.

In this world of relativity within the limitations of time and space, it is impossible to find an action which is absolutely good or which produces a result that creates no discord or disharmony in any shape or manner in any part of the world. सर्वारम्भा हि दोषेण धूमेनाग्निरिवावृताः[2] ; works are followed by their defects and demerits, just as the fire is enveloped with smokes. It is impossible to find any work producing absolute evil effect without causing some kind of good somewhere. Ordinarily, in judging a result when we see the preponderance of good over evil, we call it *good,* and where evil predominates, we say that action is *evil, wrong* or *sinful.* Wherever there is perfect harmony, peace, tranquility or happiness, there is the result of *good* acts, and wherever discord, disease, suffering, pain, misery, injury, unhappiness prevail, there is to be found the violation of the laws of health, of life, as well as of the moral laws, consequently, there is *evil.*

[2] *Bhagavad Gita,* XVIII, 48.

CHAPTER II

LAW OF ACTION AND REACTION

नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः ।

God never rewards the virtuous nor punishes the wicked.

—*Bhagavad Gita, V, 15.*

The law of causation or of *karma* includes the law that the like produces the like, or that every action must be followed by a reaction of similar nature. If I strike a blow on the table, the table will react upon me with similar force. If I strike harder, I shall receive harder blow in return. As on the physical plane, so on the finer mental plane, all mental actions produce similar reactions. Motives, desires, thoughts and other mental functions, being subject to the same law, produce *good, bad* or *mixed* results according to the nature of those mental activities. As all the mental activities determine the character of the individual ego, or the worker, we can easily classify the workers as *good, bad* or *mixed.*

The character of an individual is again subject to the law of *karma,* because it is the aggregate of large number of minute activities of the mind-substance to which we give different names such as desires, tendencies, thoughts, ideas and impressions; everyone of which is governed by the law of action and reaction. Each character or personality is the grand total result of previous mental actions, and is also the cause of future changes in the character.

In the chain of cause and effect, it can be shown that each effect is latent in the cause and each cause is latent in the effect. Applying the same law, we can understand that every form of character is in itself a cause as well as an effect. The law of *karma* inculcates this grand truth of nature, that cause lies in the effect and effect is also latent in the cause. For instance, a seed contains the whole tree potentially and produces the tree, and the tree produces the seed again. With the help of this great truth we can easily explain why a character is good or

bad, or why one individual behaves in this way or that, or why one suffers and is miserable, while another enjoys his life and is happy. We do not have to blame our parents for our misery and sufferings. It is our own *karma* that produces its results in the form of joy or sorrow, pleasure or pain, happiness or unhappiness. It is compensation. Everything that we possess in this life, is the effect of our previous *karma* or action, both mental and physical. Our present character is the resultant of our past, and our future will be determined by our present acts. Neither God nor Satan is responsible for our pleasure and pain, happiness and misery. Thus, all the inequalities and diversities of characters can be scientifically explained by this law of *karma.*

In the face of this universal law of *karma,* there is no room for the hypothesis of predestination and grace which is accepted by the majority of orthodox Christians. The hypothesis of predestination and grace teaches that God, the Creator of all, settles the destiny of man before his birth. He preordains before the birth of each man and woman what he or she will be in future. The whim of the Creator makes one sinful or virtuous, before the time of one's birth. But this hypothesis destroys our moral responsibility and personal freedom. If we are all predestined by God to be sinful or virtuous, to be happy or unhappy, we can neither undo our destiny nor act against the Divine decree. It makes us absolute automata bound hand and foot by the chain of slavery. Furthermore, it makes God partial and unjust. Why should He make one innocent creature destined to suffer and another to enjoy? Why is it that one obtains His grace before one's birth and another does not? If a sinner be destined to sin even before his birth, why should he be responsible for his works, and why should he suffer for the whim of the omniscient and almighty Creator? If God be merciful to all of His creatures, why should he not make all equally good and virtuous, moral and spiritual? These questions remain unanswered by the theory of predestination and grace. But they do not rise in the doctrine of *karma.* If we can once understand that each individual soul reaps the results of its previous acts and deeds, then we can never advocate the theory of predestination and grace. Every effect is measured by its cause.

A believer in the law of *karma* is a free agent and is responsible for all the good and bad results of his own actions that attend to his life. He knows that he creates his own destiny, and moulds his character by his thoughts and deeds. He never blames another for the suffering and misery which come to him. He learns by experience the true causes of events and removing the bad or evil, he performs such actions which produce good to all as well as to himself.

He who obeys the law of *karma,* is more moral and more virtuous than one who blindly obeys the Ten Commandments. He stands on a more rational ground than one who fears the punishment of God. He shrinks from doing anything wrong, not because it is written in a book or scripture, but because he knows that every wrong action will sooner or later react upon himself and will make him unhappy and miserable. He performs good deeds for the reason that they will bring good reaction in the form of happiness, peace, tranquility and higher enlightenment. What we call rewards or punishments of God are nothing but the reactions of our own mental and physical actions. The doctrine of *karma* denies the arbitrary Ruler and teaches that God never rewards the virtuous nor punishes the wicked—नादत्ते कस्यचित् पापं न चैव सुकृतं विभुः[3]।

[3] *Bhagavad Gita, V, 15.*

CHAPTER III

LAW OF COMPENSATION

न मां कर्माणि लिम्पन्ति न मे कर्मफले स्पृहा ।
इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते ॥

Actions do not bind Me, nor have I any longing for the result of action. Whoever knows Me thus is not fettered by action.

—Bhagavad Gita, IV, 14

The doctrine of *karma* includes the *law of compensation* and the law of retribution. These are the fundamental verities of nature. As every effect must have a cause, every consequence must have an antecedent, so also there must be equal balance between a cause and its effect, between an antecedent and a consequence. A cause must always produce an effect of similar nature both in quality and quantity, and a reaction must be similar to action. The forces of nature operate neither for profit nor for loss but for a perfect balance or harmony. If there be a surging of a high wave in the ocean there must be a deep hollow at its sides. If there be a flow of waters here, there must be an ebb somewhere. If there be tremendous heat in one place, extreme cold will be found in another place. When it is day here it is night in America. A long peace is followed by a long war, and *vice versa*. In this manner, we can show that polarity exists in every department of nature and brings in the end a perfect balance, equilibrium, harmony and justice. In short, it produces what we understand by the word *compensation*. The law of compensation is as irresistible as the law of causation and as relentless as the law of action and reaction. In fact, these three as well as the law of retribution work together. They represent merely the different phases of nature's purpose in producing diverse phenomena, each opposing the other. Take for an example H_2O produces water. H_2O is the cause, the antecedent, and water is the effect, the consequence. It is also the reaction and per-

fect compensation. There is reaction and perfect compensation. There is neither increase nor decrease anywhere. A molecule of water contains two atoms of Hydrogen and one atom of Oxygen, nothing more nor less. Similarly, heat is not only the effect and reaction but compensation for the fuel which produces it, nothing more nor less. Again electricity is the compensation for that energy which has been transformed into it. Electricity pays for energy and energy pays for it; there is neither debt nor profit anywhere but perfect balance.

As in the physical nature every force works for compensation, so in the mental, intellectual, moral and spiritual planes the same law of compensation is manifesting itself with equal regularity. There cannot be bargaining in the realm of nature. What you wish to get, you must have to pay for it first, in thought, word and deed. Something cannot be obtained for nothing. In our daily life, when we seek for a bargain either in buying or selling, we forget this law and make many mistakes and suffer or repent in the end. A man goes to buy a collar, but comes home with a refrigerator. He thinks that he has got a bargain. But he does not know that he has paid just what is its worth, nothing more nor less.

The law of compensation exists not only for insentient matter and force, but it also governs the sentient beings and intelligent souls. Whatever we suffer physically or mentally, may appear to be unjust, may make us feel that we do not deserve it, but when we trace its cause and compare with it, we find that it is perfectly right and a just compensation. When we disconnect a headache from dissipation or indulgence of a previous night, it appears to be wrong, but connected with its antecedent, it is just right and we deserve it. We cannot judge a thing correctly, if we do not connect the effects with their antecedents. The causes determine the nature of the effect, the antecedents their consequences. If the cause be evil, the effects will bring evil return. No man can defy this law of compensation. But the processes of this law in connection with the affairs of our lives are extremely intricate, and they generally involve a cycle of beginning, growth and maturity. This cycle may take a short or a long period of time to complete itself. A man may reap the result of compensation for his works either in this life or after death in

another incarnation, just as now we are reaping the results of the works of our previous lives. If we deny pre-existence and reincarnation of the soul and admit that the physical birth is the beginning of our life and by death ends all, then the chain of cause and sequence will be broken abruptly and the process of compensation will be unexpectedly interrupted by death. Then, there will be no compensation for the wicked who commit crimes and apparently enjoy all the blessings of life; nor for the virtuous who perform good unselfish works and do not get any return whatever during their life-time.

So long as we look upon our individual lives as isolated events beginning with the birth of the body and ending with its death, we shall not find correct explanation of anything, but will see injustice and wrong at every step. But when we connect our present lives with our past, and our future, and standing upon the broad platform of eternal life, that is, past and future life, if we look at our present, we shall see justice and compensation at every step. Our present is the resultant of our past, and our future will be the resultant of our present thoughts and deeds. Suppose our life begins each morning and lasts for twenty-four hours. If we disconnect the life of today from the past of yesterday and of the future of tomorrow and judge each day by its results, we shall find very poor compensation for our daily labour. Furthermore, it will seem terribly unjust to have our life falling on a wet and gloomy day with many accidents and unpleasant experiences, and another on the following day which is bright, sunshiny with many pleasant and happy experiences. Shall we be able to explain each of these fragments of life complete in itself? No. As our earthly life consists of a series of such daily lives, so our eternal life of the soul consists of many periods of earthly lives. Earthly life, when compared with the eternal soul-life, will appear to be a mere fragment as small as a life ending in twentyfour hours. The compensation for the apparent physical suffering and misery of a good and virtuous man or woman during his or her earthly career, is to be found in the soul-life. The blows on the body will by the *law of compensation* raise the soul of a truly spiritual person above the level of the ordinary mortals and such a soul will eventually command respect and honour of all nations in times to come. Conversely the wicked and

dishonest who apparently enjoy prosperity, does so at the expense of their spiritual life and the compensation will be found in their soul-life. The law of compensation covers the whole chain of our individual lives. The broader the basis of reckoning there is, the more perfect is the compensation. Threfore, if we wish to see a perfect balance of causes and effects, of actions and reactions, we must take the widest view of the soul-life and reckoning from that standpoint we shall find satisfactory solution of all perplexing problems and most complicated affairs of human life.

CHAPTER IV

LAW OF RETRIBUTION

रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्।
आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति ॥

A wise man moves about among the objects of senses free from love and hatred keeping the tranquil state of mind absolutely controlled by his true Self.

—Bhagavad Gita, II, 64.

As every good act brings its own reward by the law of compensation, so every crime or wrong act brings its own punishment by the law of retribution, whether it is found in this life or in the next. When a robber robs another, he robs himself first. He who cheats another is in reality cheating himself. No one can do wrong without suffering evil effect in the end. Wicked act and its result or reaction, which we call punishment, grow on the same stem. The former is like the flower, and the latter is the fruit.

The law of retribution is the inexorable necessity in nature. Every action reacts and brings its own reward or punishment first in the inner nature or soul, and then in the external circumstances in the form of gain or loss, prosperity or adversity, health or disease. The soul perceives the causal retribution, but the people call the change of external circumstances as retribution which comes after sometime. This law manifests itself in the soul long before the external changes appear. We have to pay the penalty for wrong doing, but not for good deeds. Virtue, wisdom, truth and love are real good; they proceed from God and therefore no one pays penalty for practising them. They are spiritual qualities; the more we practise them, the more they increase. He who seeks material good must pay taxes, but there is no tax on spiritual good.

The law of *karma* teaches that the virtuous reward themselves and the sinners punish themselves by their own thoughts

and deeds. Emerson says: "Every act rewards itself first in our own soul then in circumstance. People call the circumstance retribution".

St. Bernard said: "Nothing can work me damage except myself; the harm that I sustain, I carry about with me and never am a real sufferer but by my own fault". It is for this reason that the Hindus although do not believe in the hell-fire doctrine and do not fear the punishment of God, still they hesitate to commit wicked deeds and struggle hard to live virtuous lives simply fearing the eternal law of *karma*. The Buddhists who do not believe in a personal God and who deny the existence of the permanent entity of the soul, have founded their ethics and religion upon this universal law of *karma*, or of cause and sequence.

The doctrine of *karma* is the fundamental principle of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta. But there is a difference between the Buddhistic and Vedantic interpretation of this doctrine. The Buddhists deny the existence of a soul entity as doer, performer of acts, thinker, enjoyer or sufferer. They say, that there is no duality of a doer and his doings, a thinker and his thoughts, an enjoyer and enjoyments. The words doer, thinker, enjoyer, sufferer are mere modes of speech. The realities of our soul-life, according to Buddhism, consist in doings, thoughts, sufferings, enjoyments and aspirations. These actions are called *'karma'*, out of these a man is made, but he has no permanent soul. These *karmas* constitute one's personality which is preserved beyond death. The Buddhists maintain that the eye sees, the ear hears, and thoughts think, that all mental and physical actions of an individual produce *samskaras* or subtle forms such as deed-forms, thought-forms etc., which continue to exist even after his death and reproduce similar actions through another body in future, being guided by the law of causation (*karma*). Vedanta, on the contrary, admits the existence of a soul entity. The same intelligent and conscious self is called doer, thinker, enjoyer or sufferer. There is neither intelligence nor consciousness in the nature of physical or mental actions. As actions, they are insentient. Vedanta refutes the Buddhistic interpretation by pointing out its fallacy that if there be no permanent soul entity, the doer of an action or the sower of a seed will not be the reaper of

its fruit. If there be no identity of the doer and the reaper, there will be a great confusion in the world of actions. It will be like one person eating the food and another getting the effect and not the eater, which is perfectly absurd. Moreover, it will be against the law of action and reaction which teaches that all reaction comes back to the source from where the action started or proceeded. Otherwise, a sinner after committing sinful acts will reap the result of the virtuous deeds of another man. There is nothing to prevent this anomaly. Therefore, Vedanta says that the law of *karma* necessitates the identity of the thinker or doer and enjoyer or sufferer. As this chain of *karma* is beginningless and endless the soul entity which is the source of all thoughts and actions is, therefore, beginningless and endless. It existed before the present birth. The results of the previous actions, each individual soul is reaping now and at the same time sowing the seeds of future results by performing good and bad deeds. The *karma* that is stored is called *sanchita,* and *prarabdha karma* is that which has been the cause of the present birth, body and character. The *kriyamana karma* is what we are sowing now; and the *agami karmas* are future actions. The same idea was conveyed by St. Paul when he wrote in the 6th chapter of his epistle to the Galatins, (*verse 7th*): 'Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap'. 'And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not' (*verse 9th*). Perhaps, Christ also referred to the law of *karma* when he answered the question of his disciples: 'Who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?' Jesus answered: 'Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents'. Of course a man who was born blind, could not sin in that incarnation and when it was not the result of his parent's sin, where was the cause of his blindness? Heredity cannot explain it. The theologians say that it was the will of God, because they believe in the theory of predestination which, as I have already said, makes God partial and unjust. The only rational explanation that can be found is through the doctrine of *karma,* that is, the previous actions of the same man were the cause of his blindness. Applying the law of *karma* Vedanta will explain that he was reaping the result of his evil action which he did in his previous incarnation. There cannot be any other satis-

factory and scientific explanation of such cases. Thus, if the law of *karma* is so universal as to govern all phenomena of the world as well as of our thoughts and deeds, if it is so in-exorable as to make every individual soul reap the results of actions either in this life or in the next, and if it be true that every reaction, being similar in nature as the action itself, bound to return to the centre of action, or in other words, to react upon the actor making him or her happy or miserable, how important it is for every one of us to remember this law at every moment of our life ; and how necessary it is for every one of us to be extremely cautious in performing the duties of daily life so that we shall not sow the seeds which will bear unpleasant and disagreeable fruit and which will make us unhappy and miserable either in this life or hereafter.

The doctrine of *karma* alone can explain the mysterious problem of good and evil and reconcile man to the terrible and apparent injustice of life. Those who believe in this noble doctrine, are never disturbed in their minds at the sight of the inequalities of birth and fortune or of intellect and capacities around them. The knowledge of this universal truth prevents them from cursing life or human beings, or from blaming their supposed Creator, when they see fools and profligates are honoured in society, when they find their neighbours possessing neither intellect nor any of the noble virtues are prosperous and enjoying all the comforts and pleasures of life on account of their births in wealthy families. The doctrine of *karma* tells us the reason why people suffer although they might not have done any wrong in this life, although they apparently seem not to deserve any kind of suffering. It is the *law of compensation.* The law of *karma,* eternal as it is, predestines nothing and no one ; but on the contrary, making everyone free agent for action, shows the way out of the world of misery, through good thoughts and good deeds. The *karma* creates nothing, nor does it plan or design anything. We create by our actions the causes of good and evil and receive reward or punishment as the reactions of our thoughts and deeds by the *law of compensation.* The poor and suffering classes will find no consolation anywhere but in this one doctrine of *karma.* It is for this reason, there is so much of contentment among the poverty-stricken people of India who

can hardly earn enough to keep their body and soul together. If this noble doctrine be preached among the innumerable discontented and wretched people in Christendom, they would find a ray of hope for their future, they would try to live better lives, they would be more moral, more virtuous and more spiritual than they are today. They would be able to bear the burden of misery upon their shoulders with more calmness, with more patience, contentment and peace.

CHAPTER V

PHILOSOPHY OF KARMA

किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः ।
तत्ते कर्म प्रवक्ष्यामि यज्ज्ञात्वा मोक्ष्यसेऽशुभात् ॥

Even wise men are deluded on this point, what is action and what is inaction. I shall tell thee the philosophy of work, by knowing which thou shalt attain to absolute freedom from all imperfections.

—Bhagavad Gita, IV, 16.

Those who understand the philosophy of *karma* and act accordingly, are pure in heart and enter into the life of Blessedness.

In Sanskrit, this philosophy of work is called Karma Yoga. It is one if the methods by which the final goal of Truth may be realized. There are three others: that of love, that of wisdom, and that of concentration and meditation. But all these paths are like so many rivers which ultimately flow into the ocean of Truth, and each is suited to the mental and physical conditions of different individuals. One, in whom the feeling of worship is predominant, will naturally choose the path of love and devotion; another, more philosophical, will take that of discrimination; a third will prefer the practice of concentration and meditation; while those who have an instinctive tendency to work, who are neither philosophical nor able to concentrate or meditate, and who find it difficult to believe in a personal God, may, without worship or devotion, reach realization through the knowledge of the secret of right action.

Karma Yoga means literally 'skill or dexterity in work', and it deals with all activity whether of body or mind. Recognizing that activity is an inevitable condition of life, that no human being can live without performing some kind of work, either mental or physical, it seeks through its teaching to show how this constant output of energy may be utilized to acquire

the greatest spiritual enlightenment and to attain to perfection and absolute freedom. This can be accomplished as we are told in the fourth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita,* by seeing in the midst of activity that which is beyond all action. "He who sees activity in inaction as well as that which is above all action in the midst of the activities of mind, body and senses, is wise among mankind, is a true Karma Yogi and a perfect doer of all actions".[1]

Ordinarily we identify ourselves with the work that we are doing, and being driven on by the relentless necessity to act, we make ourselves like machines, labouring without cessation until at last we grow weary, discouraged, and unhappy. When, however, we realize that there is within us something which transcends all activity, which is unchanging, immovable, and eternally at rest, then we accomplish our daily tasks without discouragement or loss of strength, because we have learned the philosophy of work.

There are five conditions necessary for the accomplishment of all mental or physical labour. First, we must have a physical body, for it is the storehouse of energy. If we are without a body, we can do nothing on the physical plane. This body, furthermore, must be in good condition. If there is disease of any kind, it is unfit for right work. Second, there must be present the sense of the *ego* as the doer or actor. We must be conscious of the 'I' who feels the impulse to work and proceeds to follow that impulse. Third, we must have the instruments with which to work; these are many: there are the sense organs—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and sense of touch; the five instruments of physical work—the hands, feet, etc.; and the internal instrument, the brain or mind substance, with all its faculties—the power of will, cogitation, determination, memory. Fourth, we must have the desire or motive to work; and fifth, there must be some sort of environment. Without this last, senses, external instruments, and brain would avail us little. To hear a sound with our ears we must have the air; to see, there must be light and a medium to transmit its waves; while the body cannot move without space. These

[1] कर्मण्यकर्म यः पश्येदकर्मणि च कर्म यः।
स बुद्धिमान् मनुष्येषु स युक्तः कृत्स्नकर्मकृत्॥ —*Bhagavad Gita, IV, 18.*

five conditions are essential to every kind of work, whether good or bad; and in the practice of Karma Yoga we must be perpetually mindful of them, never confoundng one with the other, but holding ever before us the body, its instruments, and the knower or self-conscious actor as distinct one from the other.

The results of action, performed under these five conditions, are of three kinds: first, those that are desirable, because they help us to fulfil our aims in life, and bring us comfort and pleasure; second, those which are not desirable; and third, those which are partly desirable and partly undesirable. It is not possible to escape some one of these results at very moment of our existence; since, as has already been said, the activity of our organism never ceases. Practically speaking, there cannot be absolute rest of body or mind Even when the body seems at rest, the mind substance continues in a state of vibration; and when here, again, all conscious activity apparently stops, as in the case of deep sleep, subconscious activity still goes on in the organic actions of the system, such as unconscious cerebration, digestion, breathing, circulation; for we are learning through the investigations of science that the unconscious mind extends over a much larger area than the conscious mind; also that all conscious activity first rises there. Each of these activities of mind, furthermore, is bound to produce some kind of result.

If, therefore, activity is inevitable and each action must produce its result, what can we do to make all such results harmonize with the highest ideal of life? We can do it by searching for that which, in the midst of our varied activities of mind and body, remains always inactive. When we have found it and recognized it, we have understood the purpose of the philosophy of work, and can make our every effort lead us to the final goal of all religion, to the realization of Truth, and to the attainment of the Blessedness. If we cannot do this, we shall be forced to go on reaping the fruits of our actions and continue in the suffering and misery which we now endure. By practising the teachings of the philosophy of work, on the other hand, we shall not only bring freedom to the soul, but shall rise above all law and live on a plane above motion. From the minutest atom up to the grossest material form, there is constant motion. Nowhere is there rest. One

thing, however, moves not; one thing is at rest, and Karma Yoga explains what that is, how we may realize it and make ourselves one with it.

That something which is beyond all activity, is called in Sanskrit *Atman*. It is the Knower in us. If we use a higher discrimination and try to understand the nature of the Knower, by observing our internal processes, while we are doing anything, we shall discover that the Knower is constant. The reader knows that he is sitting, and also that he is reading. In other words, he distinguishes two distinct objects of knowledge; but the consciousness with which he perceives them, remains the same. In like manner, the Knower of all the different activities of mind and body is always identical. When we hear a sound, we know that we hear; when we see a light, we know that we see; but is the Knower of sight different from knower of sound? No. That which knows the object of sight or the object of sound, is always the same; it does not change. It was the same ten years ago and will be the same tomorrow. The Knower of all the experiences of our childhood is just the same as the one who knows what we are doing now. If we study and realize this, we shall find that the Knower is unchangeable and not bound by the conditions which govern the changeable. If it were otherwise, and if changeable and unchangeable were subject to the same conditions, not only would it be contrary to the established order of things, but must cause great confusion, since there would be no way of differentiating changeable from unchangeable.

That which is subject to time, space, and causation, is changeable, and while that which is beyond these, is unchangeable. Time, for instance, means *succession*, which is a condition of thought; and space means *coexistence*. The activities of mind, being either in succession or simultaneous, produce the ideas of time and space; they are conditions, or, as Kant call them, 'forms of thought'. One thought following another, gives us a conception of intervals which we call *time;* while, when two ideas rise simultaneously, that which separates them is what we call *space*. Thus, that which exists between the idea 'me' and the idea 'sun', we classify as *space;* yet it is purely a mental concept, having no existence outside the mind; for who knows any concrete thing designated space? Hence, since

these ideas of time and space are merely conditions of thought, they must be subject to change, because our thought is continually changing. Any thing which takes form in the mind and is conditioned by time and space, must change; but the Knower, not being a condition of mind or limited by time and space, does not change. A certain thought rises in our mind and passes, then another takes its place, to be followed again by still another, yet the witness or Knower of all these thoughts, whether of gross objects or of abstract ideas, remains the same. The universal Knower, when identified with the changes of the mind, becomes the individual knower and thinker. Thinking is an activity of the mind substance; it is a vibratory condition of this substance; and when the Knower takes upon itself that condition, it becomes knower and thinker. When it identifies itself with sense powers and sense perceptions, it becomes knower and perceiver; and it becomes the conscious mover or the physical man when it is one with the conditions and activities of the body.

In this way, if we analyse our mental activities and study the nature of the Knower, we find that it is the permanent source of intelligence, above mind and beyond thought, that it is in reality neither thinker nor actor. The *Atman* or Knower can have neither desires nor passions, for those are purely mental conditions. When the Knower is identified with any mental activity, we feel that we have desires and passions, but, in reality, we are only the Knower of desire. When we are angry, the mind is put into a certain state of vibration which is unpleasant. At first we perceive that anger is rising in us; then gradually, as it gains strength, it covers the whole mental plane and reflects on the Knower. Lacking the power to separate ourselves from the mental condition, we become identified with the wave of anger and we say: 'I am angry'. At the outset we saw anger as a state of mind, but by degrees it becomes inseparable from the Knower in us, until at last we imagine ourselves one with it. In this manner, when the Knower comes to be identified with the conditions of the mind, of the organs of work, and of the body, we appear to be doers and seek the results of our work.

When we are identified with the body, we feel pleasant and unpleasant sensations in the body. Environmental changes

produce certain effects upon our system and we fancy that we are one with these effects, and that they cause us pain and suffering; but, in reality, these changes do not affect the Knower of sensation. If, for instance, the weather changes, there will be a corresponding change in the physical organism; yet if we can separate ourselves from the body, it may experience such a change without our feeling it. If we can learn this lesson of dissociating the Knower from all changes of body and mind, and never confounding our mental and physical conditions with the immutable Being within us, we have made a great stride towards realizing the ideal of the philosophy of work.

To accomplish any work, there must be present knowledge, the object of knowledge and the Knower. For instance, before we can go from one place to another, we must be conscious of the act of going. Such knowledge is indispensable, and the object of knowledge—that is, where we are going—is equally necessary, while neither can exist without the Knower. Knowledge, again, is of three kinds. First, the knowledge of the thing or of the sense object, not as it is in reality, but as it appears to us. We have the five objects of knowledge: sound, colour, odour, savour, and touch. These we can perceive with our five senses and through these channels we acquire this first stage of knowledge. We learn that things exist around us, but such knowledge being limited, we do not arrive at an understanding of these things as they really are. For example, we say ordinarily that we hear a sound or see a colour, locating sound and colour outside of us. If, however, we analyse the nature of sound or of colour, we find that sound is nothing but vibration of air, carried by the auditory nerves to the brain, where we perceive the sensation, which, when projected outside, becomes external sound. Similarly, it can be shown that the colour we see, is not in the object or in the luminous rays which emanate from the object, but is caused by ether-waves in a certain degree of vibration. That vibrant ether coming in contact with retina and optic nerve, produces a kind of nervous stimulation, which results in the sensation of colour in the brain. By projecting these sensations outside of our bodies, we locate them on distant objects and then say that we see this or that colour.

Again, if we are going to some place, we may think that we are walking towards the north at the rate of two miles an hour; but our knowledge of this fact is only relatively correct, for to estimate our speed accurate, we must know all the conditions which affect our walking. How can we say that we are moving northward at a speed of two miles an hour, when we know that the earth is rotating on its axis from west to east at the rate of twenty-five thousand miles in twenty-four hours, or over one thousand miles an hour? Again, it is whirling round the sun at the rate of eighteen miles per second or sixty-four thousand eight hundred miles per hour; while the sun and the whole planetary system are travelling with a tremendous velocity in a grand far-sweeping spiral motion around some other centre. Such being the facts, how imperfect is the knowledge which makes us think that we are moving towards the north. In reality, there is neither north nor south. From our standpoint we may seem to be walking at the rate of two miles an hour, but our speed will be increased a thousandfold in another direction when we take into consideration the diurnal motion of the earth and its annual revolution round the sun. Furthermore, it can be shown that from the standpoint of the universe we are not moving at all. Since the whole universe is, in reality, a unit, where will it move? It cannot move anywhere. Therefore, as a part of it, we are not moving and can go nowhere.

Thus by proper analysis, we have been carried from the first to the second kind of knowledge—from the limited knowledge of the conditions under which the body seems to be moving to the higher knowledge of the conditions, as they actually are, and not as they merely appear to be. From this we may pass to the third or highest kind of knowledge, which reveals to us the unity of existence. With the help of this knowledge we learn to look at things from the standpoint of one absolute reality which is the eternal Knower of the universe. The moment that we think that our body is a part of the universal body, our mind is not separate from the cosmic mind, and that our souls, being parts of one universal soul, are most intimately connected with one another, all activity assumes a new meaning for us, and then it becomes impossible for us to act from selfish motives or to do wrong. It is when, on account

of our imperfect knowledge, we identify our true self, the universal Knower with the limitations of mind and body, we become selfish, and are ready to do the things which bring us suffering and misery. If, however, we remain conscious of the oneness of the universe, of the laws that govern mind and body, of the relation which one soul bears to another, and of the various places existing in the universe, we cannot make any mistake whatsoever. The light of true knowledge dispels the darkness of ignorance which is the cause of selfishness, and reveals the true nature of the Knower which is above all activity.

That knowledge is the highest thing which brings us into conscious harmony with the universe, and which makes us realize that the Knower is separate from the object known, and that nothing in the universe can ever exist without depending upon the existence of one universal Knower, which manifests through each individual form. This highest knowledge of oneness kills the idea of separateness and resolves the multiplicity of phenomenal objects into that underlying Reality, which is one. The phenomenal objects of the universe, such as sun, moon and stars, are, in truth, like so many eddies in the vast ocean of matter in motion. Apparently they are separate from one another, but, in reality, they are closely connected each with the other, by the undercurrent of that primordial energy, which manifests itself as the various forces of nature. The sum total of this energy in the universe is neither increased nor diminished, but is eternally one. It is also inseparable from the infinite Being, which is the source of existence and consciousness. Being deluded by appearances we get the idea of separateness and see one body as distinct from another; but when we go below the surface and seek that which produces variety, tracing it back to its final cause, the eternal energy, we inevitably arrive at the knowledge of oneness. This is the problem which every individual will have to solve. It has been solved already thousands of times by the best thinkers and philosophers of the world, but their solution cannot bring satisfaction to others. If one person has realized the oneness of existence, he will possess true wisdom, freedom from all delusions, and unbounded peace of mind; another, however, cannot gain the same result until he has risen to a like realization. With

the attainment of this highest knowledge of oneness all questions will be answered, all doubts will cease; but it is impossible to make the unawakened mind grasp what this means, for to understand, one must have experienced it for himself.

The first kind of knowledge, as has been already said, is limited. It is the knowledge of the fleeting appearance of sense objects as reality. Animals know their food, they hear sound, they smell, taste, and feel the changes of the weather; but that is all. They do not understand the causes of their sensations; their mind does not function on a plane higher than that of the senses, hence they know nothing of the things imperceptible to the senses. Those who are living on this plane of sense perceptions, are like animals. They do not believe in the existence of things which cannot be revealed by the senses; they cannot differentiate matter from spirit, soul from body, or the knower from the object known; consequently they always identify themselves with their mental and physical activities. The majority of people in every country have not as yet advanced beyond this first stage of knowledge; and it is for this reason that they are so narrow in their ideas, so selfish, so intent on seeking the comforts of the body and the pleasures of senses without thought of others. Many are still even below the higher animals in the matter of faithfulness, devotion, and care of their young.

Such knowledge is, in reality, ignorance; and the philosophy of work strives to lead us out of this state of darkness to that of the highest enlightenment, by which we may recognize the true relation of the individual to the universe, and ultimately realize the goal of unity. Ordinary people are as unconscious of this oneness as they are of the fact that they are carrying a weight of fifteen pounds to every square inch of the surface of their bodies. Think what a total weight this means! So great, indeed, that if the body were put into a vacuum, where this atmospheric pressure would be no longer exerted, it would immediately burst. Yet people bear this burden day after day without knowing it until they try to climb some steep ascent. So it is with the knowledge of their true nature. Having no realization of it, they believe that they have learnt everything, because they have learnt to care for the body. But the wise man laughs at such primitive

conceptions of life. At every step we meet this ordinary knowledge, which is based on some particular idea, narrow and limited in scope, with no element of higher knowledge in it; and it is this ignorance which is the cause of all of our mistakes. To avoid them, we must continually ask the question: Who is doing the work? Is it the spirit, mind, senses, or body? Who is the worker? If we wish to put the philosophy of work in practice, we must keep this thought constantly in mind. Then we should next ask: What special work must we do to attain to the realization of the Knower?

First of all, we must train our minds. We must open our eyes to the conditions under which we work; and when we have learnt to distinguish between the knower and the actor, we shall find it easy to apply this knowledge to our everyday life. We must remember that the five conditions, already described, are absolutely necessary for any kind of work; but they can in no way influence or affect the Knower. Intellect, mind, body, and senses exist in relation to it and cannot be active if cut off from it; but they are perpetually changing while it is unchangeable. He who realizes this that all things on the mental or physical plane exist only so long as they are in relation to the *Atman*, the absolute source of life and knowledge, sees that one which is inactive in the midst of all activity and becomes a right worker. Such an one attains to perfection through his work.

Let the body work, then, while we remember that it is the mind and the sense organs which are working, and that we are in reality the Knower, the *Atman*. Anything else is not permanently connected with us. We have taken this body for the time being and are using it for the fulfilment of the highest purpose of life; but through ignorance of the fact that our true Self is above all physical conditions, we have identified ourselves with our material instrument. Not realizing that we transcend all activity, we have imagined ourselves one with our mental modifications and organic functions; and having fettered ourselves with desires, we are struggling to satisfy them. When, however, we recognize that these desires are not permanently related to the true Self, that they exist in mind only and that we can use them as a means of attaining to perfect freedom, then they will cease to bind us and we shall find rest

and peace in the midst of our troubles. If anger or hatred or desire surges up within us, we have only to separate ourselves from that mental change and it will vanish. If passion arises we have only to remember that we are the witness-like Knower of passion and it will subside. It is when we forget that we are the Knower and become identified with anger, passion, or hatred, we fall under their dominion.

By studying the conditions, under which we perform all work, we can separate our true Self from those conditions and be happy. Then we work without considering results. But the moment that we think of gaining some specific end, we delude ourselves and work ignorantly, for the knowledge, possessed at that time, is partial and imperfect. Perfect knowledge reveals the Knower which is above all activities as well as which underlies all phenomenal objects. Understanding this, we live in the world and labour, without being enslaved like ordinary workers, by desire for work or for its results. To the outsider we may appear to be like other workers, but our mental attitude is different; and though we may outwardly resemble them, we are not, as they are, affected by the tasks which we perform with our body, mind, and senses; nor are we promoted by selfish motives.

Wise men work ceaselessly, being conscious at the same time that they are not working, allowing the body and mind to act, but seeking nothing in return. According to the philosophy of work, all those, moreover, who do not assert the self, who are free from attachment, endued with energy and perseverance, unaffected by success and failure, and who constantly do their work unmoved by desire for or aversion to the fruits of their actions, are, like these wise ones, true spiritual workers. Those, on the other hand, who are passionate and ambitious, easily affected by joy or grief, gain or loss, are ordinary workers of the world. They are never happy, but are always disturbed, anxious, and uneasy. Beneath these is still a third class of workers, the lowest of all. It includes those who are heedless, foolish, arrogant, dishonest, indolent, procrastinating, and depressed in spirit; who act without regard to the loss or injury which they may inflict upon others, and who are ever ready to deprive their fellow-beings of their rights or prevent them from gaining their livelihood. Such workers are looked upon as

criminally selfish as well as wicked; yet all their wickedness, selfishness, attachment, and passion proceed only from ignorance of their true self, who is the unattached, witness-like Knower of all things, and who remains unchangeable in the midst of the changes of mind and body.

Such is the fundamental principle of the philosophy of work, and those who comprehend it, understand that which made all the great spiritual workers of the world declare: 'I am one with the eternal Truth', or as the Hindu philosophers express it: *'I am Brahman, I am He, I am He'*. They who keep this idea constantly before the spiritual eye, will obtain unbounded happiness in this life; and when change comes to the body, they will not perceive it, so intense will be their realization of the fact that they are above all changes. Such persons have learnt the secret of work. They are peaceful, blessed, and the true workers of this earth.

CHAPTER VI

SECRET OF KARMA

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

To work thou hast the right, but never to the fruits. Be not actuated by thirst for the results of action, nor be thou pleased in inaction.

—Bhagavad Gita, II. 47.

This world may be compared to a gigantic stage, where the drama of life is constantly going on. Individual souls are the actors. They play the parts for which they are best fitted; their desires, tendencies, and capacities are determining their acts. One takes the part of a president, or a king, or a governor, or prince; another, that of a merchant or lawyer; a third, that of a husband; a fourth, that of a mother; but each without exception plays his role day after day and night after night, contributing, either consciously or unconsciously, to the vast drama, called life, with its various acts and scenes, some tragic, some serio-comic, and some melodramatic. The large majority of mankind, however, do not realize that they are thus acting on the stage of the world. They have forgotten that they themselves have selected the roles which they are impersonating, that by their own choice they have assumed these characters. They fancy, on the contrary, that some invisible being has forced them to fill these parts; and whenever they achieve a gratifying result, they imagine that unseen being is pleased; while, if the result be painful, they weep and wail and blame the same invisible power.

Occasionally some of the actors or actresses, disliking their own parts, try to change with others whose parts seem more attractive, because they show a little merriment in their play; so they pass from one role to another. Always, however, they continue to act on this world stage, gaining experience at every

step, as they move onward toward the fulfilment of the purpose of the drama. This purpose is the emancipation of the soul from slavery to the laws of nature and from the bondage of ignorance, selfishness, ambition, and all imperfections which hold it down on the plane of phenomena. Those who attain the goal, retire from the stage and appear no more. They live in bliss and happiness in the higher realm of Divinity.

The cause of all these different parts which the individual souls are playing, lies within the actors and actresses themselves and not outside of them. In their own inner nature, it is to be found; and as the power of growth, which is latent in the seed, buried beneath the surface of the earth, gradually bursts forth and manifests itself in the form of plants, trees, and shrubs, each showing the peculiarities contained in the original seed, so these powers that are slumbering in each human soul, wake up in time, stir it to action, and force it to assume some particular part in the play. It is these latent powers when roused to activity that we know as our desires and motives. So long as these desires and motives are perfectly dormant, there is no sign of activity; and this latent or dormant state is called in Sanskrit *tamas*. We can understand its character better, if we examine the condition of deep sleep. In that state, the power of walking, hearing and speaking is latent and finds no outward expression. It is a state of inertia or inactivity; but when this power wakes up, it produces a vibration in the mind substance, and this vibration we call mental activity. This again, when manifested on the external plane, appears in the form of physical activity. All physical activity, however, necessarily presupposes mental activity.

Each germ of life possesses infinite potentialities, stored up within it; and these, as they pass from the condition of *tamas* to that of active desire, drive it on through the various stages of evolution—from the vegetable into the animal kingdom and on to that of man. The first glimmering of mental activity appears in the lower animals; and it reaches its climax when the germ of life manifests as a human being. In the human form, the mind attains its highest state of activity, and this active state of mind is called in Sanskrit *rajas*, the meaning of which is activity. This impels the individual to express

itself in mental and physical action, which produces certain impressions on the mind, and these impressions become the seed of future activities and desires. Thus every action, whether physical or mental, has three states: first, activity or desire; second, outward action; third, impression. After this it remains dormant for a time, then wakes up, appears in the form of desire, expresses itself in some action, of mind or body, and again produces an impression.

Each individual is bound by these three conditions: activity or desire, work and impression. We cannot arrest our external work so long as there is mental activity. We are impelled to some kind of exertion by our own inner nature. For this reason it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "None verily, even for an instant, ever remains doing no action; for everyone is driven helpless to action by the energies born of nature".[1] Unable, therefore, to resist this inner force, we are bound to do that which we are doing. Each of our actions, furthermore, must inevitably produce some result. Every action is followed by a corresponding reaction, which returns to the point from which it started; hence the reaction of each action must come back to the soul itself and influence the doer. Further study also shows us that the character of action and reaction must be the same. If the action be good, the reaction will be good; if the action be evil, the reaction will likewise be evil. This 'law of action and reaction', or 'of cause and effect' is called in Sanskrit *karma*. Bound by this law of *karma*, each individual soul is performing various works; each actor is playing his part and reaping its results, which are in the form of good or evil, happiness or suffering.

That which we are doing today, is the result of the dormant powers with which we were born; and the cause of these powers lies in the activity of some previous state of existence. We have not received any of these latent powers from outside, but as we see that every action here leaves a certain impression which, after a period of quiescence, is again aroused,

न हि कश्चित् क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत्।
कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः॥

—*Bhagavad Gita, III, 5.*

so the cause of existing desires must be found in impressions created by past action. Our present life is a connecting link in the chain of our appearances on the phenomenal plane. Our present is the result of our past, and our future must be the result of our present. Since this is true, then we can determine our past by studying our present. Many people ask: What proof is there that we have had a past and that we shall have a future? The proof is our present condition. And this can be demonstrated scientifically by the 'law of cause and sequence.' The cause is inherent in the effect, and the effect is the outward manifestation of the cause; therefore, if we are the effects of something, that cause must be not outside, but within us. This we learn by observing nature and understanding the law of causation. This law, moreover, is irresistible and relentless. It does not stop for the orphan's cry or for the widow's tears; it sweeps on without pity and unchecked by any obstacle. It moulds the character of every individual, of sages and sinners, of kings and beggars; every one is bound by it, no one can escape it. Driven by it, we are moving hither and thither, apparently in a straight line, but more often in a circle. Starting from one desire, we go to a certain distance, describe a curve, and come back to the same place without the smallest knowledge of where and how the purpose of life will be achieved.

In this wheel of action and reaction, each individual soul is passing from one point to another, on and on, age after age. Is their any hope of extricating ourselves from this wheel? Ignorant and short-sighted people deny the existence of the law of *karma*. They say that all activity will end after the death of this body; that nothing will remain; that no one will be responsible for this body's actions. But is it likely that the law of cause and effect, of action and reaction, will cease to function, because these ignorant people do not understand and believe it? No. Whether we believe it or not, it will continue to produce its results, just as the law of gravity operates, whether a man observes or disregards it. Our belief or disbelief can never arrest the law of *karma* in its ceaseless action.

Such being the decree of nature, and the consistency of the law, the questions arise: How shall we work, what shall we do to fulfil the purpose of this drama of life? How can we

free ourselves from this law which has made us slaves of desire and passion? These questions do not present themselves often to Western minds, because they do not realize their importance so strongly as the Hindus, and because they do not find in their religion any specific mention of the law of *karma*. Now the modern science is bringing out into such strong belief in this law of causation. But the scriptures deal little with it. They try to explain everything by the law of heredity, or by the intervention of some supernatural power, always placing the cause of our deeds outside of us. They say that we are impelled by some external power to do certain things, but who or what that power is, they cannot tell us. In India, however, volumes upon volumes have been written on the subject; it has been discussed for ages; the law of *karma* has been applied to the problems of everyday existence, and through it has come an understanding of the mysteries of life which has brought consolation to millions.

Since the law of *karma* is so inexorable, every individual must be subject to it—not only in this life but also in future lives. Can there be then no escape from it? Will there not come a time, when the soul will gain freedom from this bondage of nature? As a matter of fact, the soul is not created for nature, but nature is working for the experience of each individual soul. We must realize this. But until we understand the soul in its true light, we cannot discern whether physical nature was made for it or whether it was made for physical nature. If, however, we study our own souls carefully, we find that our mind, intellect, senses, and body are within the realm of phenomena; while the real Self is something which stands as a witness outside and beyond mind, intellect, body, and senses. That witness-like something within us is beyond nature and its laws. It is already free; if it were not, we should not seek freedom. The yearning for freedom is within us; and as there cannot be a yearning for something which does not exist in reality, we can safely say that there is such a thing as absolute freedom which will be attained sooner or later as the ultimate purpose of every human life.

We have seen that all the causes of our actions are the motives or desires which lie within ourselves. So long as these desires are there, we are forced to work and reap the fruit of

our labours. In everyday life, each individual is constantly performing some kind of work from some motive. Some work for money, some for name and fame; some work in the hope of attaining heavens, and others as a penance. A certain number acquire immense wealth through their labours, and imagine that by the accumulation of riches they are fulfilling the purpose of life; but if this were true, these people would be perfectly happy and contented. Yet when their storehouses are full, they still reach out for the peace and happiness which their wealth cannot bring them. Such motives proceed from selfishness; and so long as we foster them, we must reap the results of our desires, remain attached to them, and continue to be fettered by the chain of cause and effect. All work, done through selfish motives, binds the soul to the fruits thereof, and is in consequence a cause of bondage. If, however, we can once reach the point of working without having desire for results, without seeking any return, then the law of *karma* will be broken and freedom will be ours. How can we do this? By working for work's sake and not to fulfil selfish desires.

Here it may be asked whether it is possible to work for work's sake. Of course, those who are striving for individual ends, such as name, fame, or money, will say that it is impossible; but there are a few in every country who work without personal motive and desire for return, and they are the salt of the earth. The work as if they were paying off a debt which they owe to society, to parents, to humanity. If we can labour with this idea, that all we do is merely to cancel our debt to the universe, then we can work for work's sake. When we pay off a debt, do we think of getting something in return? No, we do our work, cancel our obligation, and think no more about it. Every individual, on account of his birth, owes something to state and country, to family and neighbours, to his spiritual teachers, and to his higher self. While he lives in society, he owes a duty to society. So long as he is guarded and protected by social conditions, he is in debt to the social body which maintains them. How can he pay that debt? By being a good member of society, by doing what he can to help all other members, and by making every effort to fulfil his obligation to the community and to mankind.

We must recognize the rights of others and not perform any act which may infringe upon those rights. We must not injure our neighbour, since we do not wish to be injured by him ; and at the same time we must remember that our motive in working is not to get some return, but to pay off the debt which we owe to the world. By being good members of the family and by bringing up our children in the right way, we pay our debt to parents and forefathers. By studying the works of great men and by learning all the wisdom which has been gathered by the wise ones, we cancel our debt to them ; while we daily pay our debt to our spiritual teachers by following their example and precepts, and by helping making in the path of spiritual progress.

In India, every individual life is divided into four periods, each of which is fixed for paying off debts to some portion of the world—to parents, society, spiritual teachers, or to our own higher Self. The debt which we owe to this higher self, can be paid by realizing our true nature, by knowing who and what we are in reality, and by emancipating the soul from the bondage of nature as well as from the irresistible law of *karma* which keeps it on the phenomenal plane. This debt should be cancelled before the time of departure comes, and, in India, this conviction is very strong. The ultimate aim of life will be served if we can discharge the debt which we owe to our own selves. If we keep this idea ever in our mind as we work in the family, in the society, or in the state, we shall work without seeking any result, whether personal glory, wealth or even moral satisfaction ; and all work performed in this spirit will purify our souls from selfishness, hatred, jealousy and anger. Then we shall go our round of daily tasks, eating, drinking, talking, not with the motive of preserving our bodies, but of creating the conditions necessary for the cancelling of all our debts. We shall no longer work through attachment to the fruits of our labour, and shall, in consequence, play our parts without reaping the results if sorrow, suffering, and disappointment, which too often come when the motive of our effort is a selfish one. Then also shall we be in no danger of wrong doing.

Another thing must be considered before we can work for work's sake. All the forces, which we are using in our minds and bodies, do not really belong to us. We claim them as our

own, but, in reality, they are not ours. Can we say that the air in our lungs is ours? No; we are only making use of it for a certain purpose. Neither the force of attraction which holds the molecules of our bodies, belongs to us. It is in the universe. So when we understand our entire organism, physical and mental, we find that all the forces which we are using, belong not to any particular person, but to the universe. Looking at ourselves from the standpoint of the universe, we perceive that our bodies are like so many whirlpools in the sea of matter, every particle of which is in constant motion. Similarly, when we realize the nature of our minds, we discover that there is one mental current flowing through the universe. When that current, which is known as the cosmic mind, appears in one form, I call it my mind, in another form you call it your mind; but, in reality, it is acting in every mind. The one universal energy is manifesting through numberless forms and shapes and can never be regarded as possessed by any individual. The power of thinking, of hearing, of tasting, of smelling, all exist in the universe. Every force, operating through the machinery of the human body, is a force of Nature; but being self-deluded, we dream that these forces are ours. Therefore it is said: "Actions are wrought in all cases by the energies of nature. He whose mind is deluded by egoism thinks, *I am the doer*".[1]

Foolish and self-blinded men fancy that they are the doers of their actions, and consequently, continue to reap the fruits of their error throughout their lives. So long as we identify ourselves with our bodies, through ignorance of our true nature and call ourselves actors, players, or doers, we must endure the results of our actions. The moment, however, that we realize that this body is a part of the universal body, that this intellect is a part of the cosmic intellect, that the knower of the mind, the senses, and body is not any one of these, but stands outside, and that this knower is our true self, we let the body work with the full consciousness that we are neither actor, nor worker, nor doer, and we remain untouched by the consequences of our

[1] प्रकृतेः क्रियमाणानि गुणैः कर्माणि सर्वशः।
अहङ्कारविमूढात्मा कर्ताहमिति मन्यते॥

—*Bhagavad Gita, III, 27.*

actions. The one essential thing is never to forget that the work done by mind and body is in reality not performed by the true Self, but by nature. The wise ones realize this and are freed from the attachments which proceed from ignorance. Selfishness is the result of ignorance. When we confound our true self or *Atman* with the mind and body, we imagine that we are the narrow limited being whom we call *'I'* or *'me'*, and refuse to recognize other limited beings known as *'he'* or *'she'*. We think of our own 'little self', struggle to enrich that and suffer from the results of our ignorance. By acting thus from selfish motives year after year, we make ourselves unhappy and miserable. The wise ones, however, comprehending that these different minds and egos are only expressions of the one cosmic mind or one cosmic ego, never make this mistake, but have regard to the rights of all, love others as they love themselves, and are, therefore, always happy. Whatever they do, is done not in ignorance but with knowledge. When they play their parts on the stage of this world, they are fully aware how the drama will end and how its purpose will be fulfilled. They work incessantly, never seeking results; for they remember the teaching of the blessed Lord Krishna: "To work thou hast the right but not to the results thereof".[1]

How can we expect to get fruits of work done by nature, and not by ourselves? We cannot. By realizing, however, whence come the forces that are expressing through our minds and bodies, and by letting the results of their manifestations go to the source from which the activity proceeded, we shall cut ourselves loose from the chain of cause and sequence; and when that chain is broken we shall be free. Then we can let our hands and feet, our bodies and intellects, remain constantly active, without thinking of results or forgetting that we are not in reality the actors.

Some people imagine that by giving up action they will escape the law of *karma;* but they are mistaken. Those who have read the *Bhagavad Gita,* will recall the passage where Krishna says to Arjuna, when, overcome with compassion, he refuses to fight his adversary: "Be not a coward, this does not

[1] कर्मण्ये वाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन।

—*Bhagavad Gita, II, 47.*

befit thee; abandon this mean weakness of heart and arise, O conqueror of thy enemies!"[1] And again: "Imbued with egoism (sense of *'I am the doer'*) thou art determined not to perform that to which thy nature impels thee. Constrained by thy nature-born activities, thou shalt be forced to do that which from the delusion thou wishest not to do".[2]

This may be applied to our everyday life. We cannot withdraw from the work of the world without, like Arjuna, being guilty of cowardice. Besides, however eager we may be to retire from a life of action, we cannot, in reality, pass outside the region of activity. If we cease to work with our bodies, our minds still remain active; and our only hope of freedom is in learning the secret of work. This consists, as we have already seen, in working ceaselessly without desire for return, and without other motive than the emancipation of the soul by paying our debts. He who can thus act, is free from all the laws which bind the ordinary individual. His whole work is for mankind. All that he does, is a free offering to the world. He has no interest in results; yet he works tirelessly, and through his labours his mind and heart become purified. Then on the mirror of his pure heart reflects the divine spirit dwelling within him; and he feels that his mind and body are merely the instruments through which the Divine will is manifesting its power. Of such an one the *Bhagavad Gita* tells us: "Having abandoned attachment for the fruits of action, ever content, dependent on none, though engaged in actions, nothing at all does he do".[3]

Liberated from the bondage of ignorance, selfishness, and

[1] क्लैब्यं मा स्म गमः पार्थ नैतत्त्वय्युपपद्यते।
क्षुद्रं हृदयदौर्बल्यं त्यक्त्वोत्तिष्ठ परन्तप॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, II, 3.*

[2] यदहङ्कारमाश्रित्य न योत्स्य इति मन्यसे।
मिथ्यैष व्यवसायस्ते प्रकृतिस्त्वां नियोक्ष्यति॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, XVIII, 59.*

[3] त्यक्त्वा कर्मफलासङ्गं नित्यतृप्तो निराश्रयः।
कर्मण्यभिप्रवृत्तोऽपि नैव किञ्चित् करोति सः॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, IV, 20*

delusion, and having cut asunder the thread which binds the soul to birth and rebirth, he attains at last to the realm of eternal peace. This peace is considered as the highest ideal by every religion, and with its realization the aim of life is achieved. Having reached this condition, the soul regains its perfect freedom. Being no longer subject to the laws of nature, it is master, and can manifest those powers of omnipotence and omniscience, which are its birthright. They who have attained to this state, are called 'the Saviours of the world'. Such were Buddha, Krishna, Christ, Ramakrishna, and others. Realizing the oneness of the individual soul with the universal Spirit, they worked for work's sake, without thought of return, and whoever will work in like manner, will know true happiness in this life and will remain in peace forever.

CHAPTER VII

DUTY OR MOTIVE IN KARMA

बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते ।

He who performs his duty, understading the secret of work, rises above good and evil.

—Bhagavad Gita, II, 50.

Activity of mind and body is the condition of life, and absolute inactivity means death. This activity finds expression variously in the ordinary work of our everyday existence; and this work can be divided into three classes, according to the motive which inspires it. The first class includes all that we do for the preservation of the senses. The second embraces all actions done from a sense of duty; and the third, all that is done freely and with love. The actions of the first class, performed to satisfy the cravings of the animal nature, are mainly guided by two motives—hunger and propagation of species. If we go down into the vegetable kingdom, we find these motives expressed in the activity of trees and plants. From the lowest amœba to human beings the same expression is equally present, the difference being not in kind but in degree. As we rise higher in the scale of evolution, we observe that these motives become more clearly defined, until they reach their culminating point in man, the highest of all living creatures. Through a further process of evolution, these two motives again, when inspired by a love of self, produce the sense of right and wrong and the sense of duty. The second gradually develops from the first, and this invariably proceeds from love of self. This love of self, moreover, is very limited at the outset; since the self at this period is that which is identified with the body. Not only is this the case in lower animals, but in human beings also, who live on the animal plane and whose spiritual eyes are not open, and who identify soul with body and spirit with matter. They are unable to distinguish one from the other. In every individual, at this point, the self is the centre of all things, and

that which benefits the self becomes the unique object of attention; then the individual begins to call that which is beneficial to himself right, and that which causes him pain and suffering wrong. Moved by the love of self, he first takes care of the lower or narrow, limited ego, of that which we understand by the terms *'I'* and *'Me'*, without recognizing the 'Self' of others. At this stage of development he has no other thought than to seek his own pleasure and gratification, or to avoid that which may bring him discomfort and suffering; as we find in savage tribes, whose sole concern is for the lower self, who are, so to speak, all *'I,'* all *'Me.'* By degrees, when the moral nature begins to unfold, this same individual learns to reverence the rights of others; and by others here is meant those who are closely related to the self—the nearest relatives or those with whom the person is constantly associated. He now feels that he should not do anything to injure his nearest of kin; and this is the first dawning of the sense of duty. Henceforth, the idea of right and wrong is no longer confined to the motives of self-preservation and self-gratification, but includes the selves of those joined to him by family ties. When the individual soul finds a relative, who cares for his bodily needs or gives him certain pleasures, he commences to feel for that relative, and thinks that he ought to protect his life and seek his comfort as he would his own. This is the awakening of the sense of duty towards the family.

Next, if he comes in contact with a neighbour who brings comfort or pleasure into his life, he develops for him the same feeling as that which he bears towards his blood relation, and he strives in turn to defend his interests. Hence the origin of duty towards friend and neighbour.

In this way, if, in our own experience, we try to trace the relation existing between us and those not connected with us by ties of blood, we shall find that our feeling of duty towards them has gradually sprung from the basic principle of love of self. The particular duty of individuals, however, will vary according to the nature and circumstances of each one; for there can be no absolute standard of duty for all, since duty is in its essence relative. In this great workshop of nature, everyone is bound to discharge the duties, laid upon him by his special environments, and these environments are not al-

ways the same. As the environment varies, so will the duties vary; and as individual natures differ, so must the sense of duty differ, according to each nature and its specific tendencies. That which is duty for one person, may not be duty for another; that which is duty at one period of life, may not be such at another period. A child has its duties towards its parents, but when he reaches youth new duties arise. When he goes to school, he must assume the duties of the student life; when he marries, the duties of the married life begin; and when he becomes a father, duties to his children bind him. When, again, he remembers that he bears a definite relation to his country or state, he awakens to a sense of duty towards the nation and the government.

So, in the case of every individual, it will be found that what was duty at one moment ceases to be such at another; while new duties come up to take the place of the old ones. We all had certain duties at school, but where are they now? Gone! We do not think at present in the same way as we did when we were students; other duties have arisen and crowded out those of that time. Life is divided into different stages, and each stage has its obligations. It is a continuous process of evolution and progression in which higher duties are evolving out of lower ones and binding the soul for the time being. When we go to our office, official duties claim us; when we return home, we are met by household duties. Our whole existence is a series of occupations, each of which brings with it a feeling of *ought;* and this feeling is the sense of duty in us. There is no such thing as duty in an objective sense; we cannot get it from outside. It is purely subjective. When we perform certain acts under certain circumstances, and are conscious that we ought to do them, that feeling of obligation is duty. But who tells us that we should? Our own inner self. Impelled by natural tendencies and partial knowledge, we begin to think that under specific conditions we should perform these acts; and so long as we hold to this belief, we are forced to do them. The feeling which binds us to these special acts of body and mind is the sense of duty. Duty creates a kind of bondage between the individual and his environment. If we do not have the sense of duty, we do not feel this bondage. It is, in fact, a condition which makes us slaves while it lasts.

In our daily lives, we discharge our many duties like bond-servants; yet we keep imagining that in doing them, we shall be happy through the satisfaction which will arise from the consciousness of having done them! but the next instant conditions change, our environment shifts, and we are confronted by another set of duties and a new feeling of ought.

Nothing can make us free so long as we are fettered by this sense of duty. It is the greatest bondage of our lives. We may look upon it as eminently commendable to be perpetually constrained by the idea of ought and to force ourselves to do that which seems to us duty for the moment; but it is absolutely necessary for us to realize that this never lead to happiness. We have only to go back in our own experience to find that although we have performed numberless duties, we have not gained any lasting happiness from their accomplishment. If we should ask an old man of eighty or ninety, who has fulfilled all his oligations to family, society, and country, if he is happy, will his answer be in the affirmative? No; he will almost surely say: 'Although I have done all that was required of me as father, husband, and citizen, yet am I not happy'. Then we stop and put the question each to himself: 'If I do my whole duty, shall I be any more at peace?' And we are forced to admit: 'Most probably not'. The mere fulfilment of duty in itself cannot be productive of permanently good results. We must know, among the multiplicity of duties that surround us, which is the most important; and finally we must face the problem: 'What is the highest, the one real duty of life?'

Some people say that helping others is the highest duty. But why should we help others? Because some one has said so, or because it is written in some book? Why should we not kill everybody and enrich ourselves? The Bible declares: 'Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man'.[1] The Quran says: 'Follow the teachings of Mohammed; this is the whole duty of man'. Zoroaster tells us: 'Follow the teachings of the Zend Avesta and obey the commands of Ahura Mazda; in this lies the whole duty of man'. But why should we fear God? The answer comes: 'Because if we do not, He will punish us'. But why does He command

[1] *Eccles. vii, v.* 13.

in one way for one nation and in a different way for another? How, when the scriptures all vary, can each lay claim to supreme authority? In the Quran we read that a man may marry twenty times—Mohammed himself had eighteen wives—and this is one of the commands of God under the social conditions prevailing in that particular country; but it would scarcely do in America. Variation, indeed, is a salient feature of socalled divine commands, and when a man has read all the scriptures of the world, he does not know which to follow. Why, then, should we obey the decrees of God? There are many who do not believe in punishment; what is left for them? They will not be impelled to observe God's commands, since they have no fear of His wrath; therefore such persons will have no duty.

The word 'duty' is an abstract term, and, like all abstract terms, it cannot be defined. We can, however, get some idea of what is meant by it, if we study the different scriptures and reduce their teachings to their simplest forms. In the commands of God, we observe that all those which say: 'Do not do this or that', may be summed up in the admonition: 'Do not be selfish, be unselfish'. Let any divine command be analyzed, and this will be found to be its basis. Any action that leads one from selfishness to unselfishness, that broadens and elevates the character, that brings freedom to the soul and directs it Godward, is good, and, therefore, becomes the highest duty of every individual. On the other hand, that which shuts one within the narrow walls of one's limited lower nature, is selfish and should be avoided. When a man has realized this, his idea of duty will no longer be confined to the sayings of any book or of any person, but will be founded upon the universal law of unselfishness. His standard will be: 'That which uplifts the character is right, that which degrades is wrong'. The particular line of action, however, which will elevate or degrade an individual, will vary according to his nature and his environment. Elevation and degradation should not be measured by the standard of any one particular person in one particular stage of development, but by the loftiest ideal of all individuals, of all sects, and of all religions. The highest common standard is the absolute freedom of the soul from every bondage. That which leads to such freedom, is elevating; that which keeps one in bondage, is degrading. Therefore, it is said by Hindu

philosophers: That which elevates the soul, which brings prosperity and absolute freedom, both here and hereafter, is true duty'. This ideal of duty is like the pole star which points the way to the ship of the human soul in the troubled waters of the ocean of activity, gradually guiding it across the deep sea to the land of perfect freedom.

We have only to be constantly mindful of this one fact, that to be unselfish is our sole duty, and apply it to our daily round, to be sure that our highest duty is being accomplished. In ordinary life, we are confronted by various kinds of duties —towards ourselves, towards our family, our neighbour, towards society, country, humanity, and finally, as the culmination, towards all living creatures; for the one idea which is universal and common to all in every country and in all ages, is the non-injuring, either mentally or physically, of any living being. First we start from the lower self, from the *'I'* or *'me'*, then by degrees we come to recognize the self of others. When we begin to feel for others in the same way as we do for ourselves, we commence to rise above the limitations of this narrow self; and at that very moment we have taken our first step towards unselfishness. The end is reached when we realize that all living creatures are equal to ourselves. Jesus the Christ said: 'Love thy neighbour as thyself', and 'Love your enemies', but He did not preach: 'Love all living creatures', as did Buddha. When a goat was going to be killed, Buddha came forward and offered his own life for that of the goat. The goat's life was saved, and the man who would have killed it, afterwards became Buddha's disciple. When we begin to cherish all living creatures as we cherish ourselves, we have reached the state of development where the sense of *'I,' 'me'*, and *'mine'* vanishes; where we see all creation as one on the spiritual plane. Therefore it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: "He who sees the same divine Self equally abiding in all, doth not kill himself by his Self and so attaineth the supreme goal".[1] This realization of oneness of spirit is the highest ideal of life. It is the climax of unselfishness, and

[1] समं पश्यन् हि सर्वत्र समवस्थितमीश्वरम्।
न हिनस्त्यात्मनात्मानं ततो याति परां गतिम्॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, XIII, 28.*

becomes identical with Divine love, because God loves all creatures equally. His love, indeed, shines alike upon all, as does the light of the sun upon man and beast without distinction of kind.

When this love or feeling of oneness awakens in the soul, we rise above all duty, and work, not through a sense of obligation, but through love. Which is the higher of these two motives? Love must be higher than duty, and where there is love, there can be no thought of duty. We observe in ordinary life how, when one person falls in love with another, he loses all feeling of duty towards friends, relatives. and society; because love has annihilated all consciousness of other duties and freed the soul. While we are bound by duty, we are slaves; but if in this condition of slavery we are carried away by a strong feeling of love, all the sense of duty to family or society, which previously held us in bondage, melts away, and at that moment we become free. So we see that wherever there is true love, there is freedom, and no vestige of duty can remain. God has no duty towards any living creature, but He has love for all. We should try, then, to distinguish between love and duty; since duty puts us in bondage, makes us slaves; while love brings freedom and emancipation to the soul.

When the feeling of love towards every living creature comes to any one, that person is free from all duties, from all bondage, from all attachment to his physical nature. He does not seek sense pleasure, neither does he care to preserve the lower self or to protect the body, because he realizes that he is not the body but soul. Even when the body is torn in pieces, he is not moved, but holds to the consciousness of his spiritual nature, his *Atman* or divine self, which cannot be cut in pieces, cannot be burnt by fire, moistened by water or dried by air.[1] In realizing this, he also works without thought of return. Even those who do their duty with the hope of return, cease to think of results when they begin to be actuated by love; and all work performed through this higher motive of love takes the form of acts of worship of the supreme spirit.

[1] नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः।
न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः।
अच्छेद्योऽयमदाह्योऽयमक्लेद्योऽशोष्य एव च।
—*Bhagavad Gita, II, 23-24.*

Duty is seldom sweet, when not accompanied by love, on the contrary, it is exceedingly bitter. Suppose a wife has to perform her duty towards her husband, if there is no love, is it pleasant? Or, if the husband must do his duty towards his wife, not from love, but simply because they are bound together by law, is there any happiness in it? Where there is love, however, there is joy and peace, and love never seeks any return.[1] True love makes one work for love's sake, and the sense of duty disappears. He who understands this, knows the philosophy of work; and, moved in all his actions by love alone, he becomes blessed and a divine worker.

Jesus gave himself to mankind, because he loved them. Buddha helped humanity, because he saw men miserable and suffering and could not resist his desire to save them, any more than could a man who, seeing some one drowning and losing all thought of himself, of his very life even, rushes to the rescue. That which makes us forget our own self or our own life, is true love and beyond duty. Or rather it is the fulfilment of the highest duty, and must, therefore, bring freedom. Then whatever we do, we do through love and live in this world like incarnations of Divinity.

The final end of duty is freedom and Divine love, and with the awakening of this love comes all knowledge. Divine love and Divine wisdom are one. They unfold the inner self simultaneously and lead us to Godconsciousness. The moment that a man loves all living creatures as he loves himself, he has known the Self of all and has risen to the realm of Godconsciousness; he is no longer on the human plane. Divine love means expression of the feeling of oneness. This oneness does not appear on the physical but only on the highest spiritual plane; therefore when any one reaches this state, he knows God and sees Divinity in everything. He does not see black man, white man, or lower animals, but the divine self behind these various forms. God is manifesting everywhere and through every form equally.[2] When such a man looks on the face of a person, his eye-sight

[1] युक्तः कर्मफलं त्यक्त्वा शान्तिमाप्नोति नष्ठिकीम्।
अयुक्तः कामकारेण फले सक्तो निबध्यते॥ —*Bhagavad Gita, V, 12.*

[2] सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः। —*Bhagavad Gita, VI, 29.*

goes below the surface to bottom, to the very core, to the Soul of that soul; and through his deeper vision he perceives that the source of consciousness, existence, and bliss within that individual is the same as *Atman* or the Divine spark within himself. In thus seeing oneness, he performs his highest duty, becomes one with God, and declares as did Jesus the Christ: 'I and my Father are one'. He dwells in that supreme Godconsciousness forever; he has no trouble, anxiety, or sorrow; he is free, emancipated and blissful.[1] How can there be any sorrow, suffering, misery, or pain where there is nothing but Divinity? All these exist where the idea of duality or multiplicity prevails; but with the recognition of spiritual unity comes the cessation of pain, sorrow, and suffering.[2]

The universe is one ocean of Divinity, and all fear of death and punishment must vanish with the realization of this Truth. The real self never suffers. It is already divine and free from birth and death;[3] and when we know this, life becomes worth—living here and now. Otherwise, we may perform duties forever without finding peace and happiness; but when we realize our oneness with Divinity and reach that state of superconsciousness, or Godconsciousness, all our desires and duties are fulfilled, all the knots of our hearts are rent asunder, all doubts cease forever, all questions are answered,[4] and the individual soul passes all laws. He, who has understood the one supreme duty and fulfilled that, has reached freedom and gained Divine love and Divine wisdom on this earth. He transcends all the law of *karma,* the law of compensation and of retribution and enters into the abode of everlasting existence, intelligence and bliss.

[1] 'समदुःखसुखं धीरं सोऽमृतत्वाय कल्पते। —*Bhagavad Gita, II, 15.*

[2] यत्र हि द्वैतमिव भवति तदितर इतरं जिघ्रति, तदितरं इतरं पश्यति * *; यत्र वा अस्य सर्वमात्मैवाभूतत् केन कं जिघ्रेत्, तत् केन कं पश्येत् (बृह० उ० 2. 4. 14.)। अस्यै तदात्मकाममात्मकाममकामं रूपं शोकान्तरम् (बृह० उ० 4. 3. 21.)।

[3] न जायते म्रियते वा कदाचिन्नायं भूत्वा भविता वा न भूयः।
अजो नित्यः शाश्वतोऽयं पुराणो न हन्यते हन्यमाने शरीरे॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, II, 20.*

[4] भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे॥
—*Mundaka Upanishad, 2.2.8.*

APPENDIX I

DELUSION

If all that we see and sense are delusions, what is the truth ? We have to understand the meaning of the word *delusion*. Delusion does not mean 'non-existence'. It means *relative reality*, that is, it exists for the time being, and has not permanent existence. Very few people know the meaning of delusion. They think that it is just like the mirage. You cannot realize that as a mirage so long as you are in it. I should say it is more like a dream. Dreams are real so long as we are dreaming, but when we wake up they become unreal. If all these things that we are doing be transitory, that is, exist for the time being, and we consider them as real, it is the same thing as if we are dreaming. But there is an awakening from this state of dream, and that is called 'superconsciousness'. It is Godconsciousness. Then it appears like a dream, but not at present. At present they are all real, and we must go on doing just as we are doing.[1]

We cannot find the Truth here under these conditions, but the Truth is behind all these appearances. It is the background. From the Truth we have come into existence, in the Truth we live, and into the Truth we return at the time of dissolution. The whole universe is pervaded by Truth, but we do not see it.[2] We see only the appearance of Truth. Take,

[1] सर्वं व्यवहाराणामेव। प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताविज्ञानात् सत्यत्वोपपत्तेः। स्वप्नव्यवहारस्येव प्राक्प्रबोधात्। यावद्धि न सत्यात्मैकत्वप्रतिपत्तिस्तावत् प्रमाणप्रमेयफलल्क्षणेषु व्यवहारेष्वनृतःबुद्धिर्न कस्यचिदुपपद्यते। * * तस्मात् प्राग्ब्रह्मात्मताप्रबोधादुपपन्न, सर्वो लौकिको वैदिकश्च व्यवहारः।

—*Sankara-bhashyam, 2. 1. 14.*

[2] यः सर्वेषु भूतेषु तिष्ठन् सर्वभ्यो भूतेभ्योऽन्तरः, यं सर्वाणि भूतानि न विदुः, यस्य सर्वाणि भूतानि शरीरम्, य सर्वाणि भूतान्यन्तरो यमयति, एष त आत्मान्तर्याम्यमृतः।

—*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, 3. 7. 17.*

for example, a table. The table cannot remain forever. If you burn it, it is gone. Where does it go? What remains then? If our body is destroyed, what remains then? We do not see it. So, from the unmanifested we have come into manifestation. We can perceive with our five senses. We can see, hear, smell, taste and touch. But what we see we do not know. You see colour, for instance. You see a beautiful colour in a flower. If you analyze it and study carefully, physiology will tell you that you do not see any colour there. There is no colour. There is some kind of vibration of ether. It is a play of light, and light is nothing but vibration. But an ignorant person says: 'I see it, here it is; how can I deny it?' It is true that he cannot deny it. But what he sees and feels, is not just exactly what it is in reality. There is a certain kind of vibration which comes from the flower and produces a kind of inverted image on our retina. And that image even we do not see, but that image produces a molecular change in the optic nerve and in the cortex of the brain at the back of our head, and then it is translated into feeling or sensation. Then we try to trace the cause of that sensation, and by the law of causation we see it is there. That flower has caused this sensation, and we call it red or yellow or whatever colour you may call it. The colour could not exist if you did not have the optic nerve, the retina and the brain. It is a conditional existence, and that is the meaning of delusion. The real vibration we could not see or perceive with the senses, but it is there just the same. You may call it X. So, the real table, the foundation, the noumenon of this table, we do not see. We see only the colour, the form. Then we have the sensation of thinness or thickness, or roughness or smoothness. These are the qualities. But real substance we do not see. And therefore these qualities are the appearances. The substance is the permanent reality.

In the same way, there is permanent reality in each one of us, but only our appearances of qualities which make up our personality are seen, and that personality is constantly changing. You are not the same person of the past, when you were a boy or a girl. But you do not take into consideration all these changes. You think you are the same person, although you have a new body and brain. You are creating the brain

anew all the time, and the nervous system. The whole organism has gone through a complete change, but still you are the same person. What is not changing there? What is unchangeable in you ? That which is unchangeable in you, has given the foundation of that identity that makes you feel that you are the same person. But you do not know that thing at present. That is the most important thing, but yet we do not know it. We are deluded that we are the same person, we are going to live here forever, and this is our home. That is a kind of delusion we have. It is a false knowledge (*mithya-pratyaya*). It is indiscrimination. It is what is called 'undifferentiated consciousness'. And that is the meaning of delusion.

But we can get out of this the moment we realize who we are in reality. That is our immortal Self. That is the Truth. Truth is not far away from us. We are part and parcel of the Truth, because we are eternal. But not this body nor our personality is eternal. It will go. Our senses are not eternal, they will go. The real foundation of our being, our life, is eternal, is a life-force. But we do not know what life is any more than we know what electricity is, and yet we are using electricity all the time. So, the manifestation of electricity is an appearance, but the force itself is unknown and unknowable to us. It is unknown and unknowable to the ordinary mind. But when we have better knowledge, when we have realization of the source of all forces, then we know what it is. It is the expression of one force. The whole universe is living. There is no such thing as dead matter. But still we see it is dead matter, which is a delusion. You think that you are sick, you have a disease, an indigestion, or some kind of ache or pain. That is a delusion. You know, if you are spirit, you cannot have sickness. Spirit is never sick, and dead body is never sick. Then who is sick? If the dead body does not catch cold or have any indigestion, then where is the indigestion? That is a delusion. It is a kind of perplexing problem. But we have to go through it and transcend it.

APPENDIX II

HEART AND MIND

What is the underlying principle of the heart in contradistinction to the mind ? The two terms, 'heart' and 'mind', are used in a very loose way in ordinary conversation. The heart refers to the 'feeling', and the mind includes a lot of other activities and other functions. According to the Vedanta philosophy, mind is not the same as the spirit, but it is the instrument of the spirit. In the Christian Science and in other New Thought, you will find the mind and the spirit, the soul and the life and eternal being all refer to the same thing. In psychology, you will find that the mind includes heart, feelings, emotion and everything. But when the word 'heart' is used, we call it *chitta*. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God', says Jesus the Christ. There, the heart does not mean physical heart, but it refers to the 'feeling property' of percepts and concepts; that is, after perceiving an object an impression (*samskara*) is left in the mind. And all these impressions that we have gained must be purified. These impressions are the causes of future desires. If we wipe away these impressions that are stamped upon the mind substance, then the mind substance becomes pure. Then it gets the power of reflecting.

That idea is not given in any other philosophy except the Raja Yoga. The mind is regarded as the mirror, and if the mirror is covered with mud and dirt or dust, its reflecting power would be subdued. So, the mind of a worldly man or woman, who has all kinds of desires for the physical body and material world, has received all these impressions of material nature and they have formed like dirt or dust upon the mirror of the heart. These impressions will not die out, unless they are forced out, but they will retain the germs of future desires. The future desires are the resultant of our impressions of previous experiences. As for instance, if you eat a new dish that is very delicious, after you have finished the particular act of eating, the impression of the taste will remain in the subconscious mind, and that impression will sooner or later create a desire for that

kind of enjoyment of the same thing once more. And then, next time when you enjoy it, it will create another impression, and then the previous impression will be strengthened by the next impression. So, every time you enjoy anything or experience anything, your subconscious mind is stamped, and that gets into a habit. What we call 'habit' is but a series of impressions. And it becomes so strong that it moulds our whole character and that is our second nature. The first nature was also produced in the same way. A person becomes a drunkard or a drug addict in the same way. But these impressions (*samskaras*) are the obstacles that are holding us down on this plane, and we cannot get the knowledge of the supreme Truth. To get this supreme knowledge, we must purify our hearts. By the purification of the heart we mean that we should rub it off with discrimination. Instead of indulging in desires, some say, you should kill them out. But you cannot kill them out. There are certain cults that teach: 'Kill out all the desires and make your mind blank'. We cannot do that. It will be absolutely impossible to do that. We can reduce the number of desires by dicrimination and not allowing indulgence. In that way we can purify our heart or mind. So, the heart means the same thing as the mind, or feeling, or percept, or concept, which we have within us.

PATH OF REALIZATION

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

SEARCH AFTER TRUTH

The knowledge of Truth brings freedom—The scientists regarding Truth—The Truth among the Buddhists, Christians and Mohammedans—We are in search after the absolute Truth —The law of the persistence of force and the indestructibility of matter—What do we mean by "death"—The transformation of energy—What do we mean by *time* and *space*—Space according to Vedanta—What do we mean by *Prakriti* or *Maya*—Vedanta and science—Sense perception according to psychology—The function of 'mind' and 'intellect'—Apparent sense-objects—The *Atman*—Modern science rejects God—The conscious self in Vedanta—When an individual appreciates the Absolute—Religion according to Vedanta—Cells in the body—Each path to perfection is called a Yoga—Different kinds of Yoga—The *oneness* is the ultimate goal—When is search after Truth fulfilled.

CHAPTER II

WORSHIP OF TRUTH

God is Truth—Different beliefs in God—Means are many but the goal is one—Divine incarnations—The followers of different Teachers—The spirit of Krishna can be found in Christ—God according to the devotees—*Isvara* in Vedanta—*Isvara* as the Divine Energy—What is the spirit of a true devotee—The aspects of the Absolute that are worshipped by the devotees—What learn the seekers after Truth studying the phenomena—The substance of the universe is indestructible—The energy is constant—The eternal substance is the background of all—The knowledge of *oneness*—All the scriptures are paths to salvation.

CHAPTER III

Faith and Knowledge

Faith in God is the corner-stone of all religions—Faith-healers of today—Faith and belief—What do we mean by *faith*—*Blind faith*—Faith according to the orthodox Christians—The story of Golden Tooth as an example of blind faith—What said Buddha to Arara Kalam—The *scientific faith*—The discovery of the higher truths must start from reason—Senses often delude us—True faith—Right knowledge—*Shraddha*—True faith in God is impossible without God-realization—What say the believers in personal God—Self-analysis—Love means *expression of oneness*—Knowledge of our *Atman*.

CHAPTER IV

Necessity of Symbols

Creeds, dogmas and doctrines—The symbol of Cross—What do we mean by *Cross*—The Cross has been a religious symbol—Dr. Farrar and the Cross—Different kinds of Cross—The Egyptian symbols—The New Testament and the Cross—The Triangle as a symbol—Fish as a symbol—The serpent as a symbol—The rose—The dove—The lamb—The egg as a symbol of Easter—Resurrection—The old history of the Easter Egg—The Madonna is a symbol—The virgin Isis in Egypt—The crescent moon—Mylitta and Tammuz—The mythological descriptions behind the sun—The sun in Zend Avesta—Mithra-worship—The sun in the Vedas—The Sun and Fire as the religious symbols—Fire-worship—Two kinds of sacrifice—Symbol or image-worship among the Semitic tribes—Idol as the symbol—How did begin the art of writing—Concrete to the abstract—*Pratikas* or *Pratimas*—Conception of God as personal—Various parts to reach God.

CHAPTER V

Efficacy of Prayer

Two classes of people as believers—Necessity of prayer—Ordinary prayers—Christ and Mohammed and the prayer—

The Buddhists and the prayer—Different kinds of prayer—We pray for something—Begging is the lowest form of prayer—Prayer as a mere expression of gratitude—Arguments in favour of the necessity of prayer—There is nothing supernatural—God cannot change the laws—Our longings and emotions—The law of cause and effect—Scientists who believe in the theory of evolution—Those who believe in dogmas—Vedanta and prayer—Will-power is the highest power—Mind is not the result of matter—Evil thoughts and mind—Mental changes—Prayer is a mental desire—Desires must be harmonized with the laws of nature—True kind of prayer—Thanksgiving is not true prayer—True prayer is heard by the Supreme Being—True prayer is the first expression of the intense longing for freedom—True prayer is the contemplation of the Divine nature—Cosmic will moves the phenomena of the universe.

CHAPTER VI

ECSTASY

Dr. Myers and the spirits—In trance-like condition of soul's perception is not confined to the sense plane—What is ecstasy—In the case of spirit control—The Old Testament and ecstasy—What Koran says—Zoroaster and Buddha—The *Rishis* of India—Swedenborg and the Law of correspondences—The mystics and the ecstasy—Ecstasy is a subjective phenomena—The *Bhava*—St. Teresa and the ecstasy—*Mahabhava,* Krishna and Chaitanya—Eckhart—Plotinus's Letters to Flaccus—One-pointed flow of mind towards God—Bhakti Yoga—Ramakrishna and the *Mahabhava*—Raja Yoga and *Samadhi*—What should do the students of Raja Yoga—The practice of concentration.

CHAPTER VII

SALVATION THROUGH LOVE

Salvation is the highest ideal—The Zend Avesta and salvation—The followers of Mohammedanism—The Greeks and the

Romans—The Teutonic nations—The Norwegian heaven—The various ideas of heaven—How do the orthodox Christians think —Salvation according to Vedanta—Different *Lokas*—Heaven is not eternal—Doctrine of eternal punishment illogical—The highest meaning of salvation—The absolute freedom—Freedom means emancipation from the bondage of ignorance—The power of love—The real love—The eternal Truth is not many—The easiest way of attaining salvation—The Divine Love—Love varies in its character—Divine Love does not seek return—All desires proceed from self—How can we overcome the fear of death—Absolute renunciation—Having once acquired freedom never it is lost.

CHAPTER I

SEARCH AFTER TRUTH

तमेवैकं जानथ आत्मानमन्य वाचो विमुञ्चथामृतस्य ष सेतुः ।

Realize alone that Self,
Give up all flimsy and useless talks,
This is the only one way
To go across the ocean of death.

Nearly two thousand years ago Jesus of Nazareth declared before the world: 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'[1] The knowledge of truth (*satyam*) brings freedom to the soul; this is the quintessence of the religion preached by that illustrious personage, who is worshipped all over Christendom as the only begotten Son of God.

About five centuries before the advent of Jesus the Christ, Buddha declared in India: 'Happy is he who has found the truth. The truth is noble and sweet; the truth can deliver you from evil. There is no Saviour in the world except the truth.' Again, centuries before the appearance of Buddha, the holy sages and prophets of the Vedic period announced that truth is the goal of the universe. From truth we have come into existence, in truth we live, and into truth we return in the end. Whosoever has found the truth, is happy, is free, and is blissful. On the one hand, all the religion, all the great spiritual teachers of the world of past ages have taught that the knowledge of truth is the highest ideal, and it brings freedom to the soul; so, on the other hand, all the great metaphysicians, philosophers, and scientists of all ages, and all climes, after realizing that the knowledge of truth is the highest goal of all knowledge, spared no pains in searching after it. To know the truth, i.e. to realize the truth has always been the one theme in the life of the kings and beggars, apostles and prophets, of ancient and modern India. All philosophies, all

[1] St. John VIII. 32.

sciences, all religions are nothing but so many attempts of the human mind to realize the truth, to know the eternal truth.

Scientists of today have held the same ideal. The most eminent of modern scientists, Ernst Haeckel, writes: 'Every effort of genuine science makes for a knowledge of truth.' If knowledge of truth is the highest ideal of life, the question only arises in our minds: 'What is the nature of that truth, by knowing which the soul can become free and attain to happiness, and what are the methods by which that knowledge can be acquired?' In the first place, if we analyse the various meanings of this term 'truth', we shall find that in its most abstract sense, the word 'truth' refers to something that is universal, that is one. Its meaning in its most abstract sense is all-embracing, universal; but when it is limited by sectarian ideas, particular doctrines or dogmas, then it loses its original universal meaning. As for instance, the theologians of antiquity in trying to explain that passage: 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,' declared that Jesus the Christ was the only begotten Son of God, and that he came to this world to save mankind. This is the truth and you must believe in it. Belief in this truth will bring freedom of the soul from sin and bring pardon. That interpretation has been given by many theologians to this passage. While others have given a little different interpretation that Jesus the Christ came to this earth to preach the highest truth, and that his life was the standard of truth. If we have faith in him and in his teachings, that faith will bring knowledge of truth, and we shall be able to appreciate what truth is, and attain to freedom in the end. No other interpretation will appeal to such thinkers. On the contrary, such thinkers will not accept anything which is outside of the boundary line of their doctrines and opinions.

Similarly, if we go among the Buddhists, and enquire what they understand by truth, they would declare: 'The truth is Buddha's essence, and the truth will remain the ultimate standard by which we can discern false and true doctrines. Let us, then, revere the truth; let us enquire into the truth and state it, and let us obey the truth. For the truth is Buddha, our Master, our Teacher, our Lord'. As the Christians hold Christ, his life, and his teachings as the standard of truth, so

among the Buddhists you will find that they hold Buddha, his life, and his teachings as the standard of truth. Now here we see limitations. If we go to the Mohammedans, we will find that Mohammed is the standard of truth, and his teachings are truth. They say: 'You must have faith in his teachings, if you will to be saved.' As the Buddhists will not accept anything outside the teachings of Buddha, so the Christians do not accept anything outside the teachings of Christ; nor will the Mohammedans accept anything outside the teachings of Mohammed.

By examining all these sectarian ideas, we find that each has its limitations. That universal meaning which was almost lost in the mass of dogmas, doctrines, theories, and ceremonials, has now been recovered, and revealed once more by the scientific thinkers of the present age.

We are no longer referring to the sectarian idea of truth, but we want to know the truth. Scientific thinkers say, the knowledge of truth is the ideal of life, but by truth they do not mean sectarian truth; they want to know the ultimate cause, the reality of the source. The search after truth, according to the scientific thinkers, cannot be limited, cannot be found within the limits of any sectarian statements; on the contrary, science has rejected all the sectarian statements regarding the creation of the universe, and its cause. Science has made free invasion into the domain of nature, and has discovered many truths, which were truths unknown to the writers of the so-called revealed scriptures of the world. It has taken its stand upon reason, and has rejected all that is blind faith.

Five centuries before Christ, Buddha realized this fact, and he understood that blind faith or belief in a set of doctrines or dogmas would not help one in the search after truth and, therefore, he declared before Arara Kalama: 'Do not believe in what ye have heard; do not believe in traditions, because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe in anything, because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; do not believe merely, because the written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures, do not believe in that as truth to which you have become attached by habit; do not believe merely on the authority of your teachers and elders; after observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit

of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.'[1] Mind, this was uttered by Buddha five hundred years before the Christian era. The same spirit which guided the ancient seekers after truth in India, and which resulted in the discovery of the law of evolution, and many other moral, philosophical, and spiritual laws, which govern or which underlie all phenomena and that same spirit has also forced the scientific thinkers to find out the errors of the scriptural theories, doctrines, and dogmas, and has also made them reject and throw aside all these errors as the result of ignorance.

For two thousand years the prevailing idea has been that this world was created six millenniums ago in six days, out of nothing by some extra-cosmic Being. Has this belief done any good? On the contrary, history tells us that it has done more harm than any good. It has forced the priests to persecute Giordano Bruno, Copernicus, Galileo, who were all imprisoned and tortured, because of their denial of scriptural dogmas which were upheld by the church. For this reason, Bruno was burnt alive in the streets of Rome in 1600 A.D. But today the theory of evolution has given a death blow to the theory of Special Creation in the Genesis; we know that, that description is nothing but a myth; there is no truth in it. No scientist will accept it as truth. And those who do not believe in such an erroneous and dogmatic statement have now gained much in knowledge through science, have discovered new laws, and have gained a new revelation.

If we remember the meaning of truth, that what remains permanently, what does not change, is the ultimate reality of the universe, then we cannot accept anything that is subject to change as the ultimate truth. The theory of creation would have been true i.e. I mean, the theory of creation that is given in the Genesis, if science had supported it and if the theory of evolution were not a fact. Today the theory of evolution is a fact, so we cannot believe that the earth was created before the sun, that everything was created for the earth, and that man is the lord of the earth, of everything, and that all the lower animals were created for the pleasure of man. This was an idea among the Parsees and one which was accepted in

[1] *Kalama-Sutta.*

those days; but, when we stand upon reason we find that such ideas, having their origin in ignorance, not in absolute knowledge, must go. We are in search after the absolute truth, that which does not change. Where can we find it? With the help of modern science we have learnt many things. We have learnt that this world is full of changes; that every phenomenon of this universe is subject to constant change. This is one of the point which is gathered from the study of modern science. The next point is that all these changes are caused by the natural processes of evolution, governed by natural laws. The third point is that the law of the persistence of force and the indestructibility of matter have shown that there is no such thing as the creation of something out of nothing, or the absolute annihilation of a particle of that which has once existed. That which exists today, existed in the past, and shall continue to exist in future in some form or other. For instance, if we burn a piece of wood, apparently, that piece of wood is destroyed, but, at the same time, if we observe closely, we shall see that it has produced ashes, water, carbonic acid gas, and nitrogen, the total quantity of which is the same as that of that piece of wood. The form of wood is gone, but its elements remain the same. The quantitative substance of that wood can neither be increased nor decreased by any power which human beings have learnt to wield.

So, the form may be destroyed, when a person dies. Death means the destruction of the form, or disintegration of that particular form into its elemental condition; but the particles of matter, the forces, the energy, remain the same; they are not destroyed, and the sum total of that energy, force, and elements is always the same, and can neither increase nor decrease. There is no power in the universe that can destroy an atom or a force. But transformation of force or transformation of energy is possible; light can be transformed into heat, heat can be transformed into motion, but it cannot be destroyed; the difference is only in degree, not in kind. So, therefore, by studying science we come to the fourth conclusion that the sum total of all the forces of nature, the sum total of the cosmic energy can neither be increased nor decreased. Fifth, the sum total of matter and force which is exhibited in various forms, is beginningless and endless. No one has ever seen a particle

of matter, coming out of nothing, to take some form of existence. So, matter is uncreatable and indestructible, the same as the nature of forms. Force is uncreatable and indestructible, and the sum total of matter and force can neither be increased nor decreased. Matter, energy, and force are eternal, infinite, beginningless, and endless and these are the truths which are being carefully studied by the most advanced scientists of the present age. The appearance of things may change, a piece of stone may change into something else. But matter is indestructible, force is indestructible, ether is indestructible. The sum total of this universe in its most primordial condition is one homogeneous substance, which we cannot perceive with the senses; we can arrive at this conclusion by experience and logical inference. No one has ever seen this substance, but it is known to us through the process of logic.

By studying the exernal world, the objective world, science helps us in arriving at the conclusion, that the universe with all its variety of phenomena has come out of this eternal substance which is beginningless and endless. This substance is infinite. It does not change in quality or quantity. It may appear to change, taking different shapes and forms, but, in reality, it does not take form; forms exist in time and space, and this substance is beyond time and space. If you analyse time, you will find that it means nothing but succession, which is a condition of thought; and space means co-existence. One thought following another gives us a conception of intervals which we call *time*; while, when two ideas rise simultaneously, that which separates them is what we call *space*.[1]

But, when there is no manifestation, there is neither succession nor co-existence, i.e. neither time nor space. Therefore, the substance is not in space, but space is in the substance, and time is in the substance. The appearance of a thing may seem to be real for the time being. For instance, we see in the dark a piece of rope; we imagine that it is a snake. We are frightened. Palpitation of the heart takes place; but, when we look at that thing in broad daylight, we find it was an error. Now you see that palpitation and fright which took possession for the time being was real; we suffered from false

[1] Vide Swami Abhedananda: *Doctrine of Karma, p. 53.*

perception. The reality was that it was not a snake, it was a piece of rope. This will give you an idea of the effect of the appearance of a thing. We see that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west; but this is not a fact, this is an error. The sun does not rise in the east nor does it set in the west, but we see it so. We do not call this ultimate reality. But the revolution of the earth on its axis produces this idea. As, in going on a fast train, it appears, as if, all the trees were moving backward. So, in the same way, when we are moving twenty-five thousand miles in twenty-four hours, we find that the planets and everything else are moving in an opposite direction. Thus, we see many things as moving, but they are, in reality, the results of false perception. Although we perceive that our ideas are the results of these false perceptions, still they produce certain images in our minds. Then we jump to a conclusion, and that conclusion may be right or wrong; so that, the study of science will help us to discriminate between false perception and right knowledge. We see the colour of the sky as blue. The cause of it was explained by the old theologians thus: there was a blue dome over our head, and beyond that a heaven. But science has exploded that false explanation.

Science teaches us that space is infinite. We cannot imagine, where it begins or where it ends.[1] From the study of modern science, we have come to the conclusion that all this variety of phenomena has been produced by the processes of evolution from one homogeneous mass, and that nothing besides is known. Our scientific researches begin upon sense perceptions, continue on sense perceptions, and depend upon sense perceptions. But that which is beyond sense perception, science cannot bring to us. Science says that beyond this we cannot go, that we must stop here. So, modern science, after having described this substance as the cause of the universe, has stopped here. Some have gone beyond, but they are not

[1] But Vedanta tells that space is finite. It has a beginning and an end. And this conclusion has also been confirmed by the scientists of the twentieth century. In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* we find that space arose from the *Atman*: तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशः सम्भूतः" (Taitt. Up. 2.1). *Atman*, i.e. the knower, transcends space and time. Material science, in its search after truth, does not know what can exist beyond space and time.

considered as scientists; they have transcended the limit of science, and are metaphysicians or philosophers. But scientists tell us that this is false speculation. We cannot tell anything beyond our sense perceptions and that inference is not the same as direct perception. In India, centuries before Christ, seekers after truth came to the same conclusion that there was one substance that was the mother of all substances; they called it *Prakriti* (Latin, *Procreatrix*) or Cosmic energy, which means the creative energy. Some understood by this term, Mother, and some called it *maya,* the eternal energy or substance of the universe. According to Vedanta, *maya,* or the 'Undifferentiated' (*avyakta*), is the divine energy. It is beginningless and endless. It cannot be perceived by the senses; but it can be inferred by looking at the manifestations. If we observe the manifestations, and step by step follow the process of logic, and the deductions of reason, then we come to this homogeneous mass which manifests all these phenomena of the world.

Science has brought us almost to the gate of the reality of Truth; go through, and you will find the Truth that is beyond time and space. But shall we remain content with knowing that there is one substance? Science declares it to be insentient and that intelligence and knowledge have been produced by this insentient substance. Shall we remain here satisfied with this conclusion and seek no further? The earnest seekers will go on. We must know the unknown, otherwise life would not be worth living.

The school of Vedanta tells the scientists that they have gone so far, that they have studied the objective phenomena, which are part and parcel of the sense perceptions. But the objective world is only one-half of the source, and they cannot come to the same conclusion by studying one-half of the universe, nor can they discover the ultimate truth by the study of the objective phenomena only. When the scientists study the subjective world, they will come to another conclusion—perhaps a better one, they will discover the relations that exist between the subjective world and the objective world, and until that discovery is made the search after truth is not complete. We must put the discovery of the external world aside and search further. All scientific researches begin with the

sense perception; that is the solid ground to begin with, and, starting from that ground, we go on to that which is beyond sense perceptions.

Physiology tells us that, when we see a thing, a certain impression is produced by light upon the retina, and then that impression causes a stimulation which is carried by the optic nerves into the brain cells, where a certain molecular change is produced. This molecular change is translated by the conscious ego into sensation. So, in order to see a thing, we must have three things: the organs of sense, which must be in proper condition; a retina, capable of receiving an impression; and an optic nerve to carry the impression to the brain cells, the molecules of which must be in a normal condition. Under these three conditions, the perception of the thing with the eye, or the sight of the thing, is possible. Similarly, when we hear a sound, we must have auditory nerves to carry the impression to the brain cells. When these three things come together, we have an impression of light, sound, taste, touch, or smell. These are the gates of knowledge or perception. But that is not all. There must be mind behind these gates. When we go to sleep our ears are still open. But we do not hear in our deep sleep the noise going on in the street continuously. The physical conditions are all fulfilled. But mind is not there. Therefore, we hear no sound. In order to have the perception of sound, there must be mind attached to the organ of hearing. For instance, when you are sitting in your library reading intently, your mind is absorbed in the passage or the thought. The tick of the clock is going on all the time, yet you do not hear. Similarly, you may have your eyes wide open, but you do not see the clock, you are abstracted. Mind behind these brain centres must be active. And what does mind do? Mind cogitates, and has different impressions. Mind again, after cogitating and reflecting upon the particular nature or character of the sensation, carries it, as it were, before intellect (*buddhi*) or the determinative faculty or the faculty of judgment. Intellect compares it with other impressions stored up in the subconscious mind, and comes to a certain determination that, this is so, or that it is not so. Thus, when any sound is heard, it is intellect which determines whether it is a whistle of a steamer, a musical note or the cry of a baby. Then, after determining

its nature, intellect ultimately presents it before the subject or the knower of all mental changes.

The subject or the knower is the conscious self in us. Mind and intellect are but instruments. Thus, when the whole process is complete, we are conscious of the object. Therefore, Vedanta says that all knowledge comes from the knower within us and not from the external objects. Do you think, when you see a flower, the flower gives us some knowledge which you had not before ? No. You are the source of all knowledge and the flower gives only a suggestion. It gives a knock to you being, and in response to that knock you bring out the knowledge from within. You have never learnt anything from outside.

The objects of which we are conscious are apparent objects or things as they appear to our senses. We cannot know things *per se,* as they are in reality, but only our relations to them, or, in other words, we know only those mental changes which are produced when we come in direct contact with the objects of senses. Therefore, by studying our internal nature or the subjective side of the universe, we realise the existence of the conscious self, which is the knower of the intellect, mind with its various modifications and sensations, and which is also the knower of the external objects. This knower cannot be known by anything else. Therefore, the Vedanta asks:

येनेदं सर्वं विजानाति तं केन विजानीयात्
* * विज्ञातारमरे केन विजानीयात्[1]

"How can you know that by which we are capable of knowing everything else ? By what can the knower be known ?" Or, in other words, He who is the source of knowledge and from whom proceeds all knowledge cannot be known by mind or intellect. There is nothing in the universe which can help us in knowing the knower or the conscious self. This conscious self is called in Vedanta, *Atman.* It is not something which is produced by the mind, but it is always there as the knower; without that conscious self we cannot know anything.

The analysis will help us in understanding our subjective world. Psychological truths will help us in studying our own

[1] *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV. 5. 15.*

nature, and in realizing the ultimate truth that underlies the subjective world, as physical science was absolutely necessary in studying the external world. So, physical science and psychology are absolutely necessary in our search after truth. And thus, we shall be able to determine the connection between the truth that underlies the objective world and the truth which underlies the subjective world.

What is that truth which underlies the objective world and the subjective world? We have found that the truth is that substance which is one and not many. It underlies the objective world. And here we have found that the conscious self is the one fundamental Truth of the subjective world, because without the conscious self nothing can be known. All the schools of the Western philosophy have traced these phenomena, but have not been able to discover the connection between the truth underlying the subjective world and that of the objective world. Even Kant did not realize that the Thing-in-itself (*Ding-an-sich*) of the objective world and the *Ding-an-sich* of the subjective world are one and the same.

Vedanta on the contrary, has gone beyond the position which Kant took, and has proved that the underlying reality of the subjective world and that of the objective world is the conscious soul.

Modern science, studying the objective world, has rejected God, and the existence of the soul as an entity, and there it has shown its limitations. Still, in studying the Vedanta, you will find that the same truth which was discovered by the scientists, and by different branches of science, has been accepted; yet the follower of truth, the follower of the Vedanta, does not remain confined within any limitation. The knower, or the self in us, is the knower in the universe. Vedanta tells us that this conscious self, which is not the same as mind, which is not the same as intellect, but is a source of self-consciousness, is the same in all living creatures. Your *Atman* is not separate from that of others in its most universal sense. Every one has consciousness. You cannot bring any differentiations into that consciousness. Your conscious self is the source of all knowledge. The conscious self of the whole universe is the same everywhere, and, therefore, it is said that there is only one universal knower in the universe, and that universal knower is

the only knower. We, as individual knowers, are parts of this cosmic knower. The sum total of this conscious self is God. Beginning with the minutest animalcule up through the universe to the personal God, the sum total of this conscious self of the universe is one: it is the source of all knowledge, and the source of all phenomena, and from that conscious self everything has come into existence. Mind and all the powers of the intellect are contained in this conscious soul. That which was considered by modern science as insentient, is considered by Vedanta as the universal Being or the Reality or the unknown and unknowable Being. Vedanta tells us that it is true that it is unknown and unknowable by the mind, but it is known and knowable by our true self. By spirit, spirit can be known. Spirit cannot be known by anything else. God can be known only by God. When a mortal comes face to face with God, he is no longer a mortal. We cannot face the Absolute until we become Absolute. Then all scientific knowledge or all philosophy becomes religion. Vedanta can turn our science into a system of religion. We must stand on the solid around of reason and ultimate research to understand the final goal of religion. Vedanta tells us that religion is nothing but the science of the soul, and that science of Being is not distinct and separate from the science of the universe—that universe is but one Being.

We have numberless cells in our body. Each cell has its life, mind, and memory and may be considered as conscious of itself. And so the whole universe may be considered as one universal whole, and each separate individual is like a cell in that cosmic body. Each individual has consciousness, has life of its own, but the sum total of these makes up the consciousness of the universal Being. The knower cannot be known by anybody else. When science tells us that this absolute unknowable truth is unknown and unknowable, it presupposes the existence of a knower, and that knower is your true Self. So, the search after truth may begin with the external phenomena first, but it must come back to your true Self in the end. Then we have realized that the ultimate reality of the universe is not far from us; that it is after all our own being, a part and parcel of the universe, the Soul of our souls, the life of our life, the ultimate Reality, because God is the cos-

mic knower, the Reality of all. When we understand that, we are no longer confined within the limitations of the body, and disease and suffering no longer have dominion over us. Vedanta comes to us then with the knowledge of truth, and that freedom is freedom from the bondage of the flesh. All the desires which we have—the running after things of the world—are produced in us by our not knowing ourselves; so, when we know our true Self, we have known God, we have known the universe. Then we can never die, death being but a change of body. And knowing this, we spiritually worship the supreme Being, the highest ideal.

After giving us the highest ideal of the absolute truth, Vedanta tells us how to approach it, how to reach it. Each path is called a 'Yoga'. There is Raja Yoga, to be attained through the practice of concentration, meditation, breathing exercises, etc. Karma Yoga, the path of work; Bhakti Yoga, the path of devotion and love. These different methods are preparatory. We can reach the highest goal by following any of these methods. These various methods are given to suit the different tendencies of individuals. Some have tendency to work and cannot concentrate their minds upon anything else. They are not blessed with intellect, and so, must learn the path of work and purify their own hearts, for, 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'[1] Thus studying Karma Yoga, when we learn the secret of work, all our acts will be looked upon as a form of worship; whether we walk, or shop, or gossip even—all will be looked upon as acts of worship. Then we can turn all the feeling of our heart to the ultimate knower of all, and make our life happy and peaceful. So, also human affection and human love, when turned towards the Reality of the universe, brings freedom from the bondage of flesh, and ultimately we realize that grand Truth—the oneness with the universal Being—which was realized by Buddha, Christ, and Ramakrishna. That oneness is the ultimate goal of all religions, and cannot be realized until we know the truth and become one with it. By following this analysis, we can easily understand how deep will be our search after truth; how we must go below the surface of the world, before we can realize the ideal

[1] St. Matthew, V, 8.

of all religions, and before we can declare as Christ did: 'I and my Father are one'[1]. When we realize our true birthright and become free from the bondage of hatred, discord, and greed for possessions, we let all else go but the heritage of peace in our souls; then we transcend all conditions, for we know that death can never come to us. We can embrace death and say: 'Come, sister death! come, take the offering of my material body; we are glad to give it to you', but always knowing that we are eternal, and immortal, deathless and changeless.

Vedanta says that he who realizes the true knower, the true Self, which is deathless in our bodies, which is changeless in the midst of changes, attains to the eternal truth. His search after truth is fulfilled, and he enjoys eternal peace and happiness in this life, and for ever and ever he remains in the abode of infinite joy, infinite peace, and everlasting life.

[1] St. John, X, 30.

CHAPTER II

WORSHIP OF TRUTH

All religions unanimously declare that God is Truth, and Truth is God. Therefore, we may say that whosoever worships the supreme Being under whatsoever name and form, believes that the Truth is the object of his worship. The man who stands before a cross or an image or an idol which he believes to be the symbolic representation of his divine ideal and offers flowers and other sacrifices, burns incense, and prays for help by addressing him as Friends, Father, Lord, or Mother of the universe or by some other name, knows that the object of his worship is the eternal truth ; or, in other words, he believes that his God sees everything which is done before His image, that He accepts everything which is offered before Him, and that He hears all the prayers that are uttered in His presence. In short, he believes that, by worshipping the image, he worships the supreme Being who is the Absolute truth and Reality of the universe.

Another man, who condemns him as an idolator, may worship his ideal of the universal truth by fixing his eyes upon the sky overhead and by pouring forth the supplications of his heart in the form of prayers, asking forgiveness and pardon for his sins, and seeking His grace, which alone would deliver him from eternal perdition. He believes that his God, dwelling above the blue dome of the heavens, hears the prayers of His worshipper and sends His help and blessings to him, and delivers him from all evils and sufferings.

One may worship God or the Absolute truth, through some divine manifestation in a human form like Christ, Buddha, Krishna, or Ramakrishna. He believes that his ideal is the incarnation of Divinity in a human form, a perfect embodiment of the blessed qualities of the supreme spirit, mysteriously manifested by the creative power of the divine energy (*Prakriti*). Each of these incarnations showed the most wonderful self-mastery, disinterested love for humanity, extraordinary self-abnegation, peerless renunciation of the attachment to the

things and pleasures of the world, divine wisdom, uncommon spirituality, and superhuman powers which are exemplary ideals, rarely to be discovered among ordinary mortals. The same eternal truth can be worshipped either through Christ or Krishna, or through Buddha or Ramakrishna, or any other manifestation like these. As to an orthodox Christian the life of Jesus the Christ appeals as the highest ideal of truth, so Buddha would appeal to a Buddhist; similarly, to others Krishna or Ramakrishna would appeal as the greatest manifestaion of the absolute truth.

Each one of these divine incarnations is great and glorious. Each one of them is like the open gate through which ordinary mortals can enter the abode of truth. Each one is like a river which carries on its breast the rafts of the struggling souls to the infinite ocean of Divinity. The followers and devotees of such a divine incarnation believe in him as the truth, and worship and pray to him, as though they are worshipping the almighty Lord who pervades the univere. For instance, the orthodox Christians believe that Jesus the Christ, the only begotten Son of the Heavenly Father came to preach the truth, whatever he said was truth, and his life or whole being was the embodiment of truth. By worshipping him, they would worship the eternal truth; having faith in him, they would have faith in God; being devoted to him, they would be devoted to the supreme Being, who is the ultimate Reality of the universe. They say: If we appreciate Christ and know him, we have known the truth, and have fulfilled his saying: 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'[1] There is no other way of attaining freedom, that is, salvation from eternal perdition.

The followers of Buddha would declare: 'The truth is Buddha's essence, and the truth will remain the ultimate standard by which we can discern false and true doctrines. Let us, then, revere the truth; let us enquire into the truth and state it, and let us obey the truth. For, the truth is Buddha, our Master, our Teacher, our Lord.' Thus, the standard of truth among the Buddhists is the life and sayings of Buddha, just as the life and teachings of Jesus the Christ are with the

[1] St. John, VIII, 32.

orthodox Christians. Like the orthodox Christians, the Buddhists do not accept or honour anything as truth which exists outside the boundary line of their creed or doctrines taught by their Master. As Christ is regarded as the second person of the Christian Trinity, so Krishna is regarded as the second person of the Hindu Trinity. Buddha lived about five hundred years before Christ and Krishna appeared about fourteen hundred years before the Christian era.

The followers of Krishna regard him as the greatest incarnation of Divinity and believe that Krishna is the manifestation of the truth and Reality of the universe. He is the personification, as it were, of the eternal truth, and the Saviour of the world. Whosoever worships him, worships the embodiment of truth. Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'I am the Father of this universe, the Mother, and the Dispenser.'[1] 'I am the goal, the sustainer, the Lord, the Witness, the abode, the shelter, and the friend. I am the origin, the end, and the inexhaustible seed of all phenomena'.[2] 'By Me all this world is pervaded. My form is the unmanifested Truth. All beings dwell in Me.'[3] 'Fools disregard Me, clad in human form, not knowing My higher Being as the great Lord of all'.[4] 'I do give heat, withhold the rain and send it forth. I am immortality as well as death'.[5] 'I am alike to all beings; hateful or beloved, there is none to Me. They who worship Me with a whole-hearted love are in Me and I am in them.'[6] 'I accept the offerings of flower, fruit, and prayer, when they are made through love and devotion by the pure-hearted devotees.'[7] Again, Krishna says: 'What thou dost, what thou eatest, what thou offerest as oblation, what thou givest, and the austerities that thou performest, do that as an offering unto Me. Thus thou shalt be liberated from the bonds of selfishness and evil and shalt attain to perfect freedom, peace, and everlasting happiness.'[8] Furthermore, he says to his followers: 'Giving up all the formalities of religion come unto Me, take refuge with Me,

[1] *Bhagavad Gita. IX, 17.*
[2] *Ibid., IX, 18.*
[3] *Ibid. IX, 4.*
[4] *Ibid. IX, 17.*
[5] *Ibid. IX, 19.*
[6] *Ibid. IX, 29.*
[7] *Ibid. IX, 26.*
[8] *Ibid. IX, 27-28.*

fix thy mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me and adore me. I shall make thee free from all sins, grieve not.'[1]

The spirit of these sayings is to be found in the sayings of Jesus the Christ. The followers of Christ believe that Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. He is the Creator of all visible and invisible objects; all this universe came into being through him, the eternal Maker. Jesus said to his disciples: 'I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.'[2] 'I am the light of the world.' Like Krishna, Jesus the Christ said: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.'[3] Thus, we see that as the orthodox Christians worship the eternal truth by worshipping Christ, the Buddhists by worshipping Buddha, so the followers of Krishna worship the same truth and reach the same goal of salvation through the worship of Krishna, the Saviour of the world.

This form of worship consists in being devoted to any of these divine manifestations, in obeying their commands, and in following the path trodden by them. Like the followers of Christ the worshippers of Krishna find in him the expression of all the divine qualities and love him as their Lord and Master. The one peculiarity, however, among the devotees of Krishna is that they worship their divine ideal, not through fear, but through intense love. Where there is fear of punishment, there cannot be true love in the heart of the devotee. When the fire of divine love is once kindled in the soul, it destroys all fear and instantly burns up all sins of the worst sinner. The followers of Christ worship their Lord through fear of punishment, while the followers of Krishna worship him through love and say that fear and true love cannot remain in the same heart at the same time.

Another thing should be noticed here that all forms of worship are based upon some kind of relationship between the worshipper and the object of worship. The relation of a servant to his master or that of a creature to his Creator is to be

[1] *Bhagavad Gita, XVIII, 65-66.*
[2] St. John, XIV, 6.
[3] Ibid, XI, 28.

found among the Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, as well as among many of the dualists in India. Jesus the Christ introduced among the Jews a closer and more intimate relation—that of a son to his father. But among the worshippers of Krishna we find many who regard him not only as their Father, but as their most intimate friend. Just as in ordinary life, we open our hearts to our dearest friends, knowing that they will never chide us for our faults, but will try to help us and sympathize with us, so there are devotees who regard their divine ideal as their nearest and dearest friend, to whom they open the innermost secret of their hearts without any fear, and whose advice they follow, and whom they love, revere, and worship as the dearest friend in the whole universe. Through this worship they become one with the Absolute Truth.

There are some, again, who worship the eternal Truth as manifested in the incarnation of Krishna, through the most intense motherly love, which a true mother can feel for her most beloved child. As a mother forgets herself and everything of the world, when she fondles her child, so there are women in India who think of themselves as the mothers of baby Krishna and love and worship the Lord as their blessed child. Through that motherly love and devotion, they become absolutely unselfish and gradually reach perfection. This may be shocking to some, but for the Christian women, it would be the easiest path, if they can think of themselves as the mothers of baby Jesus and love him as their child.

There is another and the most sacred relation that is cultivated by some of the followers of Krishna. It is the love of a bride for her lover. According to these devotees, God is the eternal Lover of all mankind. They say: Let all our passions and emotions go up unto Him; they are meant for Him. If they go toward any other mortal object, they would miss their mark. All passions and desires must go to God. Who in this universe is more fitted to become the perfect lover than the eternal Truth symbolized in the form of Krishna? Thus, by giving all passions and directing all emotions to God, these devotees become free from their sting and from all earthly attachment and ultimately reach perfection. This would be the easiest method for those who follow the path of love. In Krishna-worship, all human relations can be established with

the Lord and each of them becomes the means of the realization of the Absolute Truth.

There is another way of worshipping the eternal truth or the infinite and supreme Lord of the universe, who dwells in all beings and who is the life and soul of all animate and inanimate objects of the world. He is not outside of nature, but immanent and resident in nature. He is the one stupendous Whole (*virat* or *purna*) of which the manifested phenomena are but parts. The gross material universe is His physical body. He sees through all eyes, hears through all ears, eats through all mouths, feels through all hearts, thinks through all minds and reasons through all intellects. His will is the cosmic will of which our individual will is but a fractional part. He is called in Vedanta, *Isvara,* which means the Creator, i.e. projector of the phenomenal universe and the governor of all. According to this conception, *Isvara* is the first-born Lord of the universe or the first manifestation of the unmanifested Absolute Truth. In other words, He is the highest possible reading of the unknowable eternal Reality by the human mind.

All divine incarnations like Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Ramakrishna are but the particularized or individualized manifestations of this one universal Whole. The worship of this Whole or *Isvara* includes the worship of all Divine incarnations, as well as the worship of the personal God of the various sects of the dualistic or monotheistic religions. By loving the Whole, we love all parts, however great or small they may be. In fact, to love the whole universe, which is the highest ideal of all religions, is possible only by way of loving *Isvara* in whose body dwell all animate and inanimate objects of the universe.

Isvara, again, is not only the Father, but also the Mother of the universe. Some worship the fatherly aspect and call Him, the Father in heaven, while others worship the motherly aspect or the creative Energy of the same stupendous Whole and call it, the Mother of the universe, and according to them, it is appropriate to call that divine energy, the Mother, rather than the Father. They say: 'Thou art the creative Energy of the absolute truth. Of Thee is born everything of this world. Therefore, Thou art the Mother of the universe.' 'O Mother of all! Thou art the infinite source of all powers and

forces of nature. Thou art the cause of creation, evolution, and dissolution of the world; from Thee we have come, in Thee we live, and into Thee we return in the end. Therefore, O Mother Divine, have mercy upon us, Thy children, and protect us with Thy compassionate face.' Such is the prayer of the worshippers of the Mother of the universe. They consider the absolute truth and the eternal energy as inseparable and worship the two in the form of the Divine Mother. They regard womanhood as the representation of the Divine Motherhood, and, like devoted children, they love and adore the Mother of all. A devotee of the *Isvara* or of the Divine Mother worships his ideal through whole-hearted love and devotion, and resigns his individual will to the almighty Will of the *Isvara* or the Divine Mother. He realizes that all living creatures are the children of God, they are parts of His body, and, consequently, they are inseparable from Him. As he loves the Whole, he cannot help loving the parts also. For this reason, he loves all human beings, nay, lower animals also equally, and cannot hurt or injure any one, whether physically or mentally. He feels for everybody. From the minutest insect to the highest man, all beings are his friends, because they are parts of the Whole. Therefore, he has no enemy.

Such a devotee alone can really love one's enemies. Even the most venomous snakes and ferocious tigers are not excluded from his all-embracing love. He is ready to sacrifice his body for the good of humanity. He works for the good of all without thinking of reward or any other return. Love is the chief motive power in all the actions of his body and mind. Having become dead to the lower self, he lives in the world as a free soul, ever ready to lift the burden of, and thereby, relieve the suffering humanity, and to carry it upon his own shoulders. His strength is unlimited. His powers are extraordinary. His whole body and mind are but the instruments through which the divine powers manifest themselves on the phenomenal plane. No one can be compared with such a true devotee of the *Isvara* or the Divine Mother. Thus, he becomes perfect even in this life.

Lastly, there are devotees who worship the absolute truth in its purely unmanifested aspect. Their worship does not consist in symbols, ceremonies, rituals, prayers, nor in the emo-

tions and feelings of the heart; but they worship the truth through the path of knowledge. Their worship is not limited by belief of any kind. They choose the path of right discrimination and knowledge. They understand by Truth the unchangeable Reality which forms the back-ground or the noumenon behind all phenomena. It is the pure Existence which never changes. It is called in Sanskrit *Satyam*—'that which is', or, 'that which exists at all times and under all circumstances, without being subject to any change whatsoever.'

The seekers after truth, carefully studying the phenomena of the universe, learn (1) that every object thereof is subject to constant changes, (2) that these changes are caused by the natural process of evolution and they are governed by natural laws, and (3) that the laws of the persistence of force and the indestructibility of matter have proved that, in the midst of the constant changes of the universe, there is no such thing as creation of new matter or absolute annihilation of a particle of what once existed. That which exists today, existed before and shall exist in future in some form or other. For example, when we burn a piece of wood, apparently it is destroyed. But a closer observation will show that though burning destroys both wood and air, it produces at the same time other things, such as, ashes, water, carbonic acid gas, nitrogen, exactly equal in amount, though different in properties. So, of all the existing things of the world, appearances or forms can be changed, but the quantitative amount of substance that was in the thing can neither be increased nor diminished by any power which a human being has learnt to wield. Thus we understand that the substance of the universe is indestructible. Again, the total amount of the cosmic force or energy is a constant quantity. Both the substance and energy of the universe are beginningless, endless, eternal, and infinite. Therefore, the underlying truth of the phenomenal appearances of the objective world is one eternal, indestructible, all-pervading substance which contains the potentiality of all forces and powers that are manifested in the universe. It is beyond comprehension or cognition of human minds.

The same eternal substance which manifests itself as the objects of the phenomenal world like the sun, moon, stars, earth and other planets, as well as the organic and inorganic

bodies, appears also as the eternal subject or the soul of the subjective universe. It is beyond sense perception, beyond mind and its functions, and above thought. It is the source of consciousness, the basis of intelligence and the foundation of knowledge. It does not change with the changes of body and mind. It is the one unchangeable Truth in the midst of all subjective changes. It is birthless and deathless. It is the one Absolute Being dwelling in all things, yet hidden by the veil of time, space, and causation. It is called in Vedanta, Brahman. The worshipper of this Brahman or the unchangeable Truth of the objective and the subjective universe, going through the path of right discrimination, rejects all the phenomenal names and forms, whether physical or mental, by saying, *neti, neti*—'not this, not this'. Subjugating the senses he gains perfect control over his mind and concentrates upon the Brahman. Ultimately, he enters into the state of superconsciousness and realizes that the eternal truth, which is worshipped by various individuals under different names and forms, is not very far from him; it is rather inseparable from his own being, nay, it is one with it. Having acquired this knowledge of oneness, he devotes his whole heart and soul to that eternal truth and worships it in and through all the actions of his body and mind by constantly remembering that it is the essence of his phenomenal being, the Life of his life and the Soul of his soul. It is the only Reality. Everything outside of it is unreal in the truest sense of the word. His knowledge of Brahman is the highest kind of the worship of Truth. In the fire of Brahman he pours the whole phenomenal world as an oblation and watches how it vanishes into nothingness. In his worship he needs nothing but constant remembrance or meditation. Through ceaseless devotion to truth he crosses the ocean of death, attains to immortality and perfect freedom and becomes one with the absolute Brahman.

Thus we see that there are various ways of worshipping the eternal truth. Many are the paths by sincere and earnest souls can reach the ultimate goal of all religions. Each of the revealed scriptures describes a method of worshipping the truth, gives a particular form and a particular name to it, and asks its votaries to denounce all other forms of worship. But Vedanta embraces all the scriptures of the world, accepts the

different ideals and methods of worship given in them, and teaches that all worships eventually go to the same truth, which is one and universal, and that all religions are but so many paths which end in the realization of the same all-pervading Being, whether it is called Jehovah, Father in heaven, Christ, Buddha, or Krishna, Allah, or Brahman.

रुचीनां वैचित्र्यादृजुकुटिलनानापथजुषां
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥[1]

As rivers rising from different mountains run crooked or straight into one ocean, so all forms of worship rising from different points of view, run crooked or straight into the one absolute eternal ocean of truth, which is the goal of all religions.

[1] *Shiva-mahimna-stotram.* Cf. also *Bhagavatam, X. 40. 10.*

CHAPTER III

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE

Faith in God is the corner-stone of all the great mansions of the religions of the world. It is the life and soul of all scriptures among all nations, ancient or modern, and it is the foundation of all creeds of the various sects and denominations. The Hindus, the Zoroastrians, the Christians, and the Mohammedans have been preaching for centuries that faith in God can achieve wonders, and that it is the only means of attaining salvation. A Hindu sage of this age said: 'He who has faith has all and he who lacks in faith lacks in all.' Spiritual life begins with faith, while doubt is the sign of spiritual death. In the teachings of Jesus the Christ we find similar expression. After destroying the fig tree, Jesus said to his disciples: 'Verily I say unto you. If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this *which is done* to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain. Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.'[1]

Faith-healers of today know what tremendous power faith has. The faith-healers in India have understood this power of faith from very ancient times, and they have cured many diseases in the same way as in America the Mental Scientists, Divine Healers, Christians Scientists, New Thoughtists do today. So, there is no question about the fact that faith can do wonders. Human mind possesses that wonderful power which we call faith. It may be directed towards different objects of the world or towards God. History tells us that one may have faith in a particular name and form of God, and through that faith one can achieve wonders, while another may attain similar results through his faith in a prophet, or a spiritual master or saint or an imaginary *mahatman* or an image of a certain personified ideal or any idol or one's own self. It does not make any difference, by what name we may call the object

[1] Matt. XXI. 21-22.

of faith; thus far it is true that faith is a great power. We are all familiar with this truth.

Now let us pause for a moment and ask ourselves what is the nature of this faith which has so much power. Is it a kind of dogmatic assertion of one idea in one's own mind? Is it a kind of belief which is not based upon reason or experience? Is it a kind of trust or confidence in a particular person or object? Or, does it mean a kind of mental conviction which proceeds from right reasoning, knowledge, and experience? Ordinarily, we understand or rather use reason and knowledge. It is generally accepted, the words 'faith' and 'belief', as opposed to that faith, lead one to a realm, where reason and knowledge cannot reach. It is used in the sense of a belief in something supernatural, supersensuous, and super-rational, as contradistinguished from reason or knowledge, which depends upon observation, inference or upon the sensations, perceptions, and impressions received through the senses. It means a firm conviction of the truth of what is declared by another simply on the ground of his truthfulness, or faithfulness, or intellectual conviction. This kind of faith is never backed by reason or knowledge. It is that which is commonly known as blind faith. For instance, if we take for granted as truth any story or tradition, because it has been handed down to us through generations, or because it is written in a certain book without asking any further question, but which is supported neither by reason, nor by experience, nor by evidence of any kind, then that belief will be blind faith.

Suppose we blindly believe in the story of Jonah and the Whale.[1] Do you think that it will reveal any truth or being any good to us or make us better than what we are now? Certainly not. It is nothing but a superstitious belief, or a blind faith. We may believe in such stories for years, we may blindly accept them as true, but by that we shall not gain anything nor come nearer to truth; on the other hand, we shall remain deluded and ignorant all the time. Suppose, if we say to ourselves that body does not exist, will that make body non-existent? No; it is a false belief, a blind faith. Blind faith proceeds from ignorance which is the mother of super-

[1]Jonah, I, 17 and II, 1-10.

stition and delusion ; consequently, it ultimately leads to ignorance. We should learn to distinguish this blind faith from true faith. There is no other word in the English language more abused than this word 'faith'. Ordinary people use this term with so many different meanings. What the orthodox Christian Churches ordinarily call faith is nothing but sheer credulity. It means the same thing as was meant by the old Church Father Tertullian, when he said: *'Credo quia impossibile est,'* that is, 'I believe, because it is impossible.' It reminds me of the answer which a Sunday-school girl gave, when she was asked what faith was. She replied that it was believing something that one knew, was not true.

We often hear people say: 'We have faith in the life of such and such a great man, who was born in Nazareth nearly two thousand years ago, who lived in a certain way or did or said certain things.' Faith has nothing to do with the biography of that great man. The facts about the life of a man, however great he might be, are matters of history ; they are not to be accepted in a lump by anybody as an object of faith, but they are for critical scientific examinaion just as much as the life of Socrates, Plato, or Shakespeare. If we do blindly accept it upon the authority of some writer, it will not be faith, but sheer credulity, and it will do no special benefit to us. Blind faith is considered by orthodox churches as a virtue. It takes the name of religious faith, when it means a belief in absurd dogmas and doctrines, in miracles and supernatural agencies, which are hopelessly contradictory to reason as well as to the facts of science and the laws of nature. It is the same as what we call superstition. Superstition always contradicts the well-known laws of nature and is therefore irrational. Credulous people do accept any absurd thing or statement as truth, without making proper investigation, and waste a great deal of their time and energy in supporting it.

Let me remind you of the story of Golden Tooth mentioned by Fontenelle[1] in his *Histoire des Oracles.* In 1595 a child of seven was found in Silesia to have one of its first double teeth, a gold tooth instead of an ordinary tooth. The rumour spread rapidly like wild fire. The Professor of Medi-

[1] A celebrated French writer, born at Rouen, in 1657 and died in Paris, in 1757.

cine in the University of Helmstadt, whose name was Horotius, wrote the history of this tooth declaring that it was miraculous and that it was done by God to console the Christians for the ravages of the Turks. The explanation was accepted seriously by those who heard the rumour. A second account of the tooth was written in the same year by Rullandus and after two years another scholar, Ingolsterus by name, wrote a third account, contradicting some minor particulars given in the first two treatises. A little later another great savant named Libabius collected all that had been said and written about the tooth and published a volume describing how wonderful and miraculous this tooth of gold was. Those learned works brought the child with its gold tooth before the public with great prominence. At last a goldsmith who was of a sceptical nature came to see the child, and, after close examination, discovered that a cap of gold-leaf was very skilfully placed upon the natural tooth of the poor child. But treatises and books had been written and theories and explanations had been given by great scholars, before any one thought of consulting a goldsmith or a dentist.

We find many similar instances in these days. Credulous people still believe that Tibetan *mahatmas* send letters by occult powers to American Theosophists living in New York. This kind of credulity may be called blind faith. At one time, a priest who was administering the sacrament, held up before the communicants a piece of old bread which was tinged with reddish mould and declared: 'You can see for yourselves that the emblems have verily been turned into the real flesh and blood of the crucified Lord.' The credulous people believed it. But the microbe that caused the red tinge on the bread must have laughed in its sleeve and felt highly honoured! We must first of all make our mind free from such credulity and blind faith, by bringing the light of reason and knowledge. In India, about five hundred years before the Christian era, when Buddha lived, the masses of people had this kind of blind faith. In order to make their minds free from all sorts of superstitious beliefs, which got firm hold on them, Buddha said to Arara Kalama: (1) do not believe in what ye have heard; (2) do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; (3) do not believe in anything,

because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; (4) do not believe merely because the written statement of some old sage is produced; (5) do not believe in conjectures; (6) do not believe in that as Truth to which you have become attached by habit; (7) do not believe merely on the authority of your teachers and elders; after observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.'[1]

That faith is beneficial which is founded upon right knowledge, right reason and is supported by proper evidence. Is true faith, then, the same as scientific faith? The study of science reveals to us that, all hypothesis and theories of modern science are based upon what is called scientific faith. All scientific generalizations and explanations of the phenomena depend upon this scientific faith or intellectual conviction, without which our knowledge will keep us within the limits of sense perceptions, and the discovery of any truth that lies beyond those limits will be absolutely impossible. In physics the theory of the vibratory movement of ether, in chemistry the hypothesis of atoms and their affinity, in biology the theory of the molecular structure of living protoplasm—in all these and similar other theories and hypothesis, we exercise our imagination which fills up the gaps left by the intelligence in our knowledge of the connection of things. Although they are approximations to truth, still they are indispensable for all true science. Astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and other branches of science cannot go very far without depending upon some theories, nor can they explain the world of phenomena without assuming a common cause which may remain obscure in character.

We do not know the nature of the force of gravity, still we believe in the law of gravitation. And that belief is so strong that it cannot be shaken by any theory of the Bible or any other revealed scripture. Similarly, the ether of the physicists, the atom of the chemists, the heredity of the evolutionists—all these are nothing but conceptions of some great theories, which are the outcome of the scientific faith. That faith is indispensable for all scientific discoveries. But scientific faith always stands

[1] *Anguttara Nikaya, Kalama Sutta, III. 653.*

upon observation and experiment and never contradicts any of the truths or laws discovered by science. It is that power of the mind by which we receive and hold the truth until some other higher truth is discovered. In science we accept that theory or concept as true which for the time being explains most of the facts leaving the mind open to higher truths and better explanations. Consequently, the faith in such a theory is relatively true, but not absolutely. In short, when faith is joined with the knowledge of science, and, when reason approves of what faith accepts as true, it is rational and not blind faith.

Thus we see scientific faith, which helps us in discovering the higher truths of nature, must start from reason, must be based on the solid foundation of reason, observation, and knowledge, and not on tradition or heresy. Otherwise, it will become blind faith and superstition. Scientific faith is relatively true, but true faith is that which never changes, but is always the same. As the Absolute Truth is unchangeable, so true faith is absolutely unchangeable.

It is that kind of faith which establishes some truth contradictory to that which appears to our senses to be true. For instance, we see the sun rises in the east and sets in the west; this apparent knowledge, which we gather through sense perception, is to be corrected by a belief in the rotation of the earth upon its axis, which we can never perceive by senses, but still it is a rational faith. As long as it is supported by right reasoning, it has more power than our belief in our sense perceptions. Senses often delude us because they are imperfect. They prevent us, many a time, from knowing the real nature of things. Optical delusions, like the blue colouring of the sky and so forth, produce a kind of false belief in our mind. It should be corrected by right reasoning and right knowledge. And faith which rests upon right knowledge is much more powerful than that which proceeds from wrong perception, just as the Copernican theory and conception of the universe is stronger than the Ptolemaic conception.

True faith is the unerring handmaid of right knowledge. Therefore, as right knowledge is a great power, so true faith is a tremendous power. True faith and true knowledge come simultaneously. Wherever there is true faith, there is also

right knowledge, and *vice versa*. Blind faith being opposed to right knowledge is also opposed to true faith. By right knowledge we mean the realization of the true nature of a thing. If we want to have true faith in a thing, we must have to realize or know exactly the absolute and unchangeable nature of that thing. There is only one unchangeable Reality of the universe which is called God. Therefore, true faith in God involves right knowledge or realization of God and, conversely, knowledge of Self produces true faith in one's real nature or Self or *Atman*. As long as we do not realize what God is, we imagine that God must be like this or that, which is nothing but projection of our ideas, or we take for granted without questioning certain statements either from a scripture or from some other authority; and, if instead of going further we delude ourselves by imagining that we have true faith in God, the result will be that we shall not be able to realize God, so long as we are thus deluded. All progress will be stopped. Consequently, true faith will never come. True faith does not come in confinement, but it appears in the mind which is unbiased and always open to Truth and which is able to transcend all the limitations of time, space, and causation.

The first sign of true faith is *shraddha*, i.e. that frame of mind which is to be found in a true enquirer or an earnest seeker after truth; that *shraddha* is the first stage of faith, which leads to the realization of truth. It is that earnest and unbiased attitude of mind which is receptive of truth and which leads the searching mind step by step into the realm of the Unknown and ultimately ends in the realization of the Unknown. First of all, there must be a firm conviction regarding the existence of truth. Otherwise, the search after truth will be of no avail. God is at first unknown to us. We first believe in His existence, then we approach that unknown Being at first by guesses, by imaginations, and by projecting our thoughts and ideas and personifying them; we think that He is outside of us; then we search here and there; in this search after that Unknown, weak intellects, having failed to find any reality, become atheistic and agnostic; and those who have blind faith not guided by proper reason and knowledge stop somewhere and mistake the guesses for truth.

But a true seeker does not stop until he has realized it.

He suddenly turns the course of his search from outside to inside; he dives deep into his heart and there he discovers the Reality, and then he realizes God who is enthroned within his heart. Then God and his real Self are no longer separate, but are one. Then he says: 'I am He' (*so'ham*). Then and then alone comes true faith in God. If the whole world stands against him and denies what he says, he cannot think or say in any other way. Therefore, true faith in God and realization of God as the soul of our souls within us are simultaneous. True faith in God is impossible without the realization of God within us or without the knowledge of our real Self. This realization again comes through ordinary faith or conviction that there is a God; because it is more perfect to know an object in itself by means of its immediate presence than to arrive at its knowledge by hearing the teachings of others or by reading books. It is a state in which one begins to taste inwardly what has been embraced and held in faith so long. When we know our true Self we know God. Again knowing and being are the same. Bacon said: 'The truth of being and the truth of knowing is all the same.' 'A man is but what he knoweth.'

Therefore, it is said in Vedanta that the knower of God is God Himself. When we realize our true divine nature, all the powers that are in God gradually begin to flow through our soul. Such a man, who has realized the oneness between God and soul, is a God-man on earth. He is free. He cannot do anything wrong. At every step he realizes that God's will is working through his mind and body. He feels it, he is conscious of it. He has lost his idea of separateness; he has bathed in the ocean of Unity; his ego has become transformed into divine Spirit. He has crossed the ocean of death by the bark of the knowledge of his supreme Self. Such men are worshipped as living God on earth. They are the embodiment of Truth, Reality, and Divinity. All the great founders of religions first attained to this realization and then they appeared before the public. Therefore, it is said in Vedanta that nothing can be higher than the right knowledge or realization of Divinity in man, or one's divine Self. Its another name is true faith.

A man who has not reached this highest realization may

believe in this or that, or assert or deny this or that, or have faith in God whom he does not know; but it cannot be called true faith; there is no life or strength in such a faith; he will not manifest divine powers through his actions; and his ego will not be transformed into divine ego. He may cure certain diseases, such as, headache or nervousness and so forth, but he will not be able to know the Reality of the universe, or God or his own nature. But the more we realize our Self or true nature, the higher we rise above the physical plane where pain, disease, sorrow, or suffering cannot reach. If simple assertion and denial can produce such results as we often hear, how much more can be achieved, when the true knowledge of our own perfect nature and true faith in ourselves will come to us.

All the dualistic religions, which believe in an extra-cosmic personal God, say that, if you do not believe in such and such a name and form of God, you are an atheist; they do not say anything about the knowledge of Self. But Vedanta says, if you do not have faith in yourself, you are an atheist. This Self we must at first learn to understand as one which is the knower of body, senses, mind, intellect, feelings, sensations, and so forth. Self-analysis is necessary to come to the door of Self-realization. But self-analysis of an impure mind will not reveal the true Self or Spirit. Mind must be properly trained in order to come straight to truth without going astray. Untrained minds generally fail to understand the true nature of Self. Some look upon the Soul or Self as a wonder; others speak of it with great astonishment; others again hear of it as wonderful. Few can comprehend it after hearing it described over and over again.[1] Such subtle and inscrutable being the nature of our Soul or Self or *Atman,* we ought not to neglect it nor deny its existence. Our first duty ought to be to find out who we are, and what the nature of our soul is. Vedanta has preached this unique method of realization of God for centuries. I do not find this method in any of the dualistic systems of religions. The method is this: 'First realize your higher Self or true nature. Do not bother your head about the attributes of God, whether He is personal or impersonal

[1] आश्चर्यवत् पश्यति कश्चिदेन-
माश्चर्यवद्वदति तथैव चान्यः। —*Bhagavad Gita, II, 29.*

and so forth. All these questions will be answered, when you know or realize your *Atman* or true Self.'

The result of such a method is that it denies the special necessity of all the rituals, ceremonies, forms, symbols, mythology, scripture, imagery, and a host of other things, which a dualist believes as absolutely necessary for realizing God. It has simplified theology into philosophy, faith and its results into knowledge or realization, salvation into freedom of the soul from the bondages of ignorance, superstition, and so forth, and Truth or God into the Self or Reality in us. It is a great relief for the mind which is overloaded with all the paraphernalia of a dualistic creed. They have their use at a certain stage of religious development. But they are not necessary in every stage.

Faith in the dualistic conception of the extracosmic God does not help us to know our true selves, nor the true selves of others, nor the Reality of the universe; while the knowledge of our Self or *Atman* brings us the knowledge of not only our immortal nature, but of every individual, and of all living creatures, and of the Reality of the universe. Therefore, knowledge of Self is more potent than the blind faith in an extracosmic God whose existence is neither supported by science nor reason.

Faith in God as separate from the universe makes us separate from Him, from one another, and also from the universe; while knowledge of Self brings and shows us the harmony and oneness of Spirit in the variety of the phenomena. Such a faith makes us always afraid of punishment and does not bring love in our soul, because love means, expression of the realization of oneness; it does not make us unselfish, because the hope of reward is always predominant in the mind of a worshipper. But the realization of our divine nature makes us love all human beings, irrespective of their caste, creed, or nationality, nay, all living creatures with equal kindness. Therefore, it is more useful and uplifting. Such a faith forces us to disregard all knowledge which we gather from science or philosophy and to throw it aside as useless, while knowledge of our true Self makes the best use of everything and accepts every truth discovered by every branch of science and philosophy. It does not fear anything; therefore it is stronger.

Knowledge or realization of our Self or *Atman* makes us come direct to the intra-cosmic God, immanent and resident in nature. It is infinitely more powerful than ordinary faith which is not attended with such a realization. A sinner may have faith in God and may continue to be a sinner. But, if he knows what his Self is, he is instantly transformed into a great sage. Knowledge of Self (*atmajnana*) brings strength in one's self and that strength can overcome everything which stands in its way. The great Hindu sage[1] of the nineteenth century, whose life and sayings have been published by Prof. Max Muller, said: 'As a man, who is desirous of fishing in a lake or pond, first goes to those persons who have fished in it, and eagerly asks them, whether there are big fishes in the pond or not, what kind of bait is necessary and so on; and having collected all informations and believing in the instructions of his friends, he resorts to the pond with his rod, waits there throwing his line and allures the fish with patience and dexterity until he has succeeded in hooking a large and beautiful dweller of the deep: so a sincere and earnest seeker after truth putting implicit faith in the instructions of holy saints who have realized divinity must try to catch and confine God in his bosom, with the bait of devotion, and the rod of the mind, and hook of concentration. He must wait with patience until the divine fish is caught and the eternal truth is realized. Blessed is he who has attained such knowledge and realization of the divine Being; he is free, happy, and divine even in this life.'

[1] Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa Deva.

CHAPTER IV

NECESSITY OF SYMBOLS

The world needs today a universal religion, which will embrace within its unbounded arms all the established religions of the world, and which will give them their proper places which they deserve in this scale of religious revolution. The civilized world hears the cry of heresy and anathema, when a broad-minded theologian stands in the pulpit and dares to point out the error in the current beliefs, dogmas, and creeds of a sectarian religion. However, the time has come, when we should show the courage of our convictions, stand up before the public and preach the gospel of truth, without fearing any of the criticisms that may be levelled against us. The time has come, when we should preach in a prompt and triumphant voice before the world that truth is eternal and that it cannot be monopolized by any sect or creed or religion.

Before we accept anything in the way of creeds, dogmas, and doctrines, we must exercise our own common sense, our own reason which God has given us to use; and to make a proper use of it we must go down to the bottom of all dogmas, religions, and creeds, and try to understand what the original meaning was, and we should also try to show clearly the significance that lies behind all the forms of worship and behind all methods which the human mind has adopted, in order to reach Godconsciousness.

Now, we shall try to understand the meaning of symbol-worship and whether there is any necessity of symbols or not. In discussing this matter, we find that all dualistic religions, which advocate the worship of a personal God, ask their followers to use some kind of symbol at the time of their devotional exercises. These symbols are either material objects of nature, figures, or pictures of some great personage, or concrete representations of some abstract ideas. The most prolific use of various kinds of symbols is to be found amongst the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Roman Catholic Christians. Upon the altar is kept the image of Jesus the Christ on the

Cross, or the statue of Madonna with the baby Jesus in her arms, with angels holding a crown over her head; the lighted candles, incense, flowers, prayers, incantations, different postures of the priests, their vestments, in short, everything that is used in cathedrals or churches, are symbols either of some being or of some thought, or of some abstract idea.

The Protestant Christians use largely the symbol of the Cross;[1] some denominations have introduced the candles and incense, others have altars, some have pictures, either of Jesus the Christ or of his ascension, or of his resurrection, or of a crucifix on the wall. All Christians practise the sacrament and partake of the Holy Communion by eating the bread and drinking the wine, which are symbolic of the body and blood of their Lord. The ancient Greeks used to worship bread as Demeter (Ceres) and wine as Dionysus (Bacchus). This custom was prevalent amongst the ancient Egyptians, Persians, as well as amongst the Hindus of the Vedic period. It is still practised by the Buddhist Lamas in Tibet.

The Cross has been a religious symbol from prehistoric times among all nations. Whatever importance the followers of Christ may attach to the worship of the Cross, by connecting it with the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth, it existed as a religious symbol for centuries before the birth of Christ,[2] and was largely used as a sacred emblem by the Egyptians, the Buddhists, the Chinese, the Persians, the Hindus, and other ancient nations of the world. There have been various forms of this Cross. The ancient Egyptians used a Tau Cross, the shape being like the English letter 'T'. The commonest of all the Egyptian Crosses, the *Crux Ansata,* was afterwards adopted

[1] 'Except the Latin *crux* there was no word definitively and invariably applied to this instrument of punishment. The Greeks used the word to translate both *palus* and *crux;* * * In Livy even *crux* means a mere stake. * * Other words occasionally applied to the cross are *patibulum* and *furca,* pieces of wood in the shape of Π (or Y) and A respectively. More generally the cross is called *arbor infelix,* or *lignum infelix.* * * The Hebrews had no word for a cross more definite than "wood", and so they called the transverse beams "warp and woof". *Crux* is connected with *crucio,* and is often used proverbially for what is most painful * *.'—Vide Smith & Fuller: *The Bible Dictionary,* Vol. I, p. 670.

[2] Dr. Farrar well surmises: 'It was not till the sixth century that the *emblem* of the Cross became the *image* of the Crucifix. As a symbol the use of the Cross was frequent in early Church. It was not till the second century that any particular efficacy was attached to it.'

by the Christians.[1] A Cross with four equal arms was symbolized to represent the four elements of nature; when the form of the Cross consisted of two or four sceptres with a circle at the point of interception, it was said to indicate 'divine potentiality'; it stood sometimes for 'protective power', sometimes for 'life to come'. A long Cross surmounting a heart which we so often see in pictures in Christendom, meaning originally good or goodness, was used to be fixed upon the fronts of houses in Thebes and Memphis, intimating: 'This is the abode of the good.'

The Egyptian symbols of five planets had a Cross connected with each. Among the Hindus of ancient India the Cross was used very largely as a religious symbol long before the time of Christ, or of Buddha who lived about 600 B.C. It was supposed to be the sign of good luck, longevity, prosperity, and happiness, a protector from evil, and its use was connected with

[1] The Cross or *Crux* is mainly of four kinds: (1) Simplex, (2) Decussata, (3) Commissa and Ansata, and (4) Immissa or Capitata (Latin).

(1) *The Crux Simplex,* or bare stake 'of one single piece without transom', was probably the original of the rest. Sometimes it was merely driven through the man's chest, but at other times it was driven longitudinally, * * coming out at the mouth, a method of punishment, called the *infixio.*

The *affixio* consisted merely of trying the criminal to the stake, from which he hung by his arms.* * Trees were naturally convenient for this purpose * * .

(2) *The Crux Decussata,* X, is called St. Andrew's Cross, although on no good grounds, since, according to some, he was killed with the sword; and Hippolytus says that he was crucified upright, *ad arborem olivae.* It is in the shape of the Greek letter X. * * Hence Justin Martyr quotes Plato's expression * * with reference to the Cross.

(3) *The Crux Commissa* or St. Anthony's Cross, T, (so called from being embroidered on that Saint's cope * *) was in the shape of a T. * * This shape is often alluded to as 'the mystical *Tau*'. * * It is known as the patibulary or Egyptian Cross, but seems to be of Phœnician origin.

A variety of the Cross (the *Crux Ansata,* 'Crosses with circles on their heads') is found 'in the sculptures from Khorasabad and the ivories from Nimrod. M. Lajard * * refers it to the Assyrian symbol of divinity, the winged figure in a circle; but Egyptian antiquaries quite reject the theory. In the Egyptian sculptures, a similar object, called a *Crux Ansata,* is constantly borne by divinities, and is variously called 'the key of the Nile', 'the character of Venus', and more correctly (as by Lacroze) 'the emblem of life'.

(4) *The Crux Immissa* (or Latin Cross +)* * That this was the kind of Cross on which our Lord died is obvious * *, it is repeatedly found on the coins and columns of Constantine, * * Firmic. Maternus says that Moses made a Cross of his rod * *. Other supposed types are Jacob's ladder * *; the paschal lamb, pierced by transverse spits * *. —Vide Smith & Fuller: *Bible Dictionary,* Vol. I, pp. 671-672.

various religious rites and ceremonies. It was called in Sanskrit *svastika,* which had the same meaning. This *svastika* Cross has been found among the Buddhists of the pre-Christian era in their tombs, temples, inscriptions, and coins.[1]

In the New Testament, there is no positive evidence as to the shape of Christ's Cross ; no one knows exactly what its real shape was. Scholars and Christian authors from the second century A.D. down to the present day, have formed their opinions according to their guesses and imaginations. Neither do we know the exact fact of Christ, nor most of the pictures that we see of him and of the Madonna are idealized by the artists.

Like the Cross, the Triangle has been a symbol from very ancient times. The Triangle has been accepted by the Christians as the emblem of the 'Ever-blessed Trinity'. In India, it has been the symbol of the Hindu Trinity, Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva. It was also a religious symbol in Egypt and Greece.

Again, the Fish has been a religious symbol among the Christians as well as among the followers of other religions. The productive power of the universe was represented by it. Sometimes Christ was emblemed in the form of a fish. There are many old pictures and statues with a Cross in the middle and a fish on each side. Rev. J. P. Lundy says in his *Monumental Christianity*: 'In the Talmud the Messiah is called *Dag* or Fish. Where did the Jews learn to apply *Dag* to their Messiah and why did the primitive Christians adopt it as a sign of Christ? I cannot disguise facts.' Even today a fish is considered as a sign of good luck in India. Buddha was called *Dag-Po* or Fish Buddha.

The Serpent was also a religious symbol. It represented Christ among the early Christians. From prehistoric times, it has been the symbol of wisdom and eternity. Commonly, it is believed that the serpent is an emblem of evil ; but, at the same time, in studying the religious history of the world, we find that the serpent was also used in representing the great saviours of the world. There was a time, when a serpent on

[1] Arthur Lillie says: 'The only Christian Cross in the catacombs is this Buddhist *Swastika.*'

the Cross was to be worshipped as an emblem of Jesus the Christ.[1]

In Greek mythology Apollo was worshipped in the form of a serpent, and was invoked as the solar serpent-god. Æsculapius, the healing god, was also represented with a serpent. The serpent is an emblem of evil, when it is represented with its deadly fangs; and 'an emblem of eternity,' or 'the wisdom of the sun', when it is with its tail in its mouth, thus forming a circle. In ancient times the serpent was considered to be the most spirit-like and fire-like of all reptiles, moving as it were, propelled by breath and taking a spiral direction as rapidly as it chose. For this reason, the ancient inhabitants of this earth meant by this symbol nothing but the spirit or soul, the life or intelligence of the universe, and it was accepted largely amongst the different nations, such as the Egyptians, the Persians, the Chinese, the Tibetans, and the Jews; in fact, it was the serpent which brought wisdom to the Garden of Eden, according to the story of the Genesis. It may be represented as an emblem of evil, but it did a great deal to humanity by opening the eyes of the people. In Hindu mythology, Shiva, the third figure of the Hindu Trinity, is adorned with serpents as ornaments on his body. Again, Vishnu is represented as lying on the bed of a thousand-headed serpent, and Krishna, the Hindu Christ, as standing on the hood of a huge serpent.

The Rose was used as a symbol of the sun; it was placed on the Cross in the jewel of the Rosicrucians. Probably, it came from the fable of Adonis, the sun-god, who was changed into a red rose by Venus. Jesus the Christ was called the Rose—the Rose of Sharon—of Isuren.

Again the Dove, representing innocence or gentleness, stands as the symbol of the Holy Spirit among the Christians. Rev. J. P. Lundy says: 'It is a remarkable fact that this Spirit (i.e. the Holy Spirit) has been symbolized among all religions and civilized nations by the Dove'.[2] Ernest De Bunsen says: 'The Symbol of the Spirit of God was the Dove in Greek *Peristera,* and the Samaritans had a brazen fiery dove, instead of the brazen fiery serpent. Both referred to fire, the Symbol

[1] Moses set up a brazen serpent in the wilderness. Tertullian says that from this serpent arose the early sect of Christians called the Ophites.
[2] Vide J. P. Lundy: *Monumental Christianity.* p. 293.

of the Holy Ghost.'[1] Buddha, who lived about 600 B.C., was represented with a dove hovering over his head. Juno had a dove on her head. It was also sacred to Venus. The crucified Dove which was worshipped by the ancient Greeks, was none other than the crucified Sun. At the time of the ceremonies in honour of his resurrection, the worshippers used to exclaim: 'Hail to the Dove, the Restorer of Light.' The crucified Dove was beautifully described by Pindar, the great lyric poet of Greece, who lived about 522 B.C. The dove in India has been the symbol of gentleness and a friend in desolation and emblematic of conjugal attachment and fidelity to each other. A white dove is also a symbol of purity.

Like the Dove, the Lamb has been a religious symbol. The oldest representation of Jesus the Christ was the figure of a lamb, couched at the foot of a Cross. This custom was held up till A.D. 680, that is, until the time of the pontificate of Agathon, during the reign of Constantine Pogonat, when by the Sixth Synod of Constantinople, this ancient symbol of the Lamb was substituted by the figure of a man fastened to a Cross.[2] This was confirmed by Pope Adrian I. This is further supported by the fact that, 'in the *Christian* iconography of the catacombs no figure of a man appears upon the Cross during the first six or seven centuries. There are all forms of the Cross except that * *. That was not the initial but the final form of the Crucifix.'[3] The Paschal Lamb was for centuries before Christ roasted on a Cross by the Israelites. The lamb in India was the symbol of innocence. Like Jesus, Krishna is called *'the good Shepherd.'*

The Eagle also has been used as a religious symbol in Hindu and Greek mythology. It stood on the national flag of the Romans as well. In Hindu mythology, Garuda or Eagle has always been the favourite bird of Vishnu, the second figure of the Hindu Trinity.

The Egg as a symbol of Easter is also a very wonderful

[1] Cf. E. D. Bunsen: *Angel Messiah,* p. 44.

[2] 'In the course of time the Lamb was represented on the cross, but it was not until the sixth synod of Constantinople, held about the year 680, that it was ordained that instead of the ancient symbol, the figure of a *man* fastened to a cross should be represented. This canon was confirmed by Pope Adrian I.'—Williamson: *The Great Law,* p. 116.

[3] General Massey: *The Natural Genesis,* Vol. I, p. 433.

symbol. On Easter Sunday, the whole of Christendom rejoices at the thought of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth ; in fact, it is the date of universal rejoicing among all the heathen, Christian, and pagan nations all over the world. It is one of the universal festivals that has been handed down to us from prehistoric times. This is a spring festival which was to be celebrated in ancient times, long before the birth of Christ, by those people who understood the resurrection of nature after its death in the winter time, and they celebrated this festival on the 25th of March, or about that time. During the winter time, one-half of the world goes to sleep, or into apparent death ; so, when the sun comes up to the equator and moves towards the Tropic of Cancer, that is supposed to be the resurrection of the sun. You will find that, among the Greeks and Romans, they have a celebration ; among the Persians the same festivities are practised, and among the Jews, there is the celebration of the Passover. So, it will be noticed that it is a universal festival.[1] The Easter festival refers to the universal resurrection of nature, and it is also symbolized as the resurrection of spirit from matter ; in other words, it refers to the resurrection of the whole world, and the resurrection of the world was symbolized in the resurrection of Jesus the Christ. It is the crucifixion of the animal self and the resurrection of the spiritual Self. When the resurrection comes, the animal self which has been crucified no longer exists, but the spiritual Self reigns

[1] 'Easter had been observed as a pagan festival hundreds of years before Christ. 'Like many other of our festivals, Easter is of very great antiquity. It was at the same season as our Lent that the noblest ladies of Phœnician and pagan Sevilla bore on their shoulders the golden effigy of Venus, while the people followed weeping and clad in mourning in remembrance of the death of Adonis.

'The Romans also celebrated their Hilaria on the 25th of March. The Greeks sang their Jouloi, or song of gratitude, to Mother Earth at this season. The ancient Jews had their Paisack or Passover, which in many languages is the name Pascua still given to Easter. Also, the Persian festivals of Spring and the ancient *Houli* of Hindustan, all celebrated at this same time. Even China had its festival of *Gratitude of Tien*.

'Among the many symbols which have been employed to mark this festival few are more interesting than the sacred Egg. It was Pope Paul V, who first introduced this symbol into the ritual of Easter, which began: "Bless O Lord, we beseech Thee, this Thy creature of eggs." When Bishop James Gillis of Rome and Edinburgh washed the feet of twelve poor Irishmen some years ago on Easter Day, he presented each one of them with an egg and an orange. Eggs are used in many countries to mark the Spring festivals.'—Cf. John Henry Smith in a letter to the editor of the *New York Times*, dated the 10th April, 1911.

in its own glory; in other words, the human being then attains to perfection. So Christ's resurrection signifies the resurrection of spirit from matter and not the resurrection of matter, though uneducated masses believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus. Thus, it is not confined to one or a few, but is universal for all human beings. The origin of this conception is to be found in the *Zend Avesta* among the Zoroastrians. The Jews received it during the Babylonian Captivity (586-536 B.C.). Spiritual resurrection means regeneration. Every sincere seeker of God will has to regenerate from matter or material life, his ego must be crucified and his spirit will resurrect and ascend to Heaven. Death of the flesh, that is, death of one's attachment to flesh and to matter is the beginning of spiritual birth or regeneration. The way that leads to this is not the way of the world. This is to live in the world, but not be of it. Regeneration begins with self-mastery over one's animal nature.

The Easter Egg has an old history. In the Vedas we find that the whole world (*brahmanda*) was conceived at first as an egg, and in this universal egg, there was a self-effulgent Being, the first-born Lord of the universe, radiant with spiritual light and of a golden colour.[1] The mundane egg of the world, *brahmanda* in Sanskrit, is described in the *Manusamhita* as containing the Creator or the first-born Lord Brahma, and at the time of creation, this egg was broken open and the Lord of the universe came out; out of those two parts He created the heaven and the earth.[2]

[1]हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे
भूतस्य जातः पतिरेक आसीत्।

—*Rigveda, X. 121.*

[2]तदण्डमभवद्धैमं सहस्रांशुसमप्रभम्।
तस्मिन् जज्ञे स्वयं ब्रह्मा सर्वलोकपितामहः॥

—*Manu, I. 9.*

तस्मिन्नण्डे स भगवानुषित्वा परिवत्सरम्।
स्वयमेवात्मनो ध्यानात्तदण्डमकरोद्द्विधा॥
ताभ्यां स शकलाभ्याञ्च दिवं भूमिञ्च निर्ममे।
मध्ये व्योम दिशश्चाष्टावपां स्थानञ्च शाश्वतम्॥

—*Manu, I. 12-13.*

It is a scientific fact, however, that human beings are born of human ovums, which, although invisible to our naked eyes, are in the form of an egg. There was a belief amongst the Chinese that their first man was born from an egg, which was dropped down from heaven to earth by their God *Tien*. The Egyptian priests never ate eggs, because the egg was sacred to Isis. It is said that Osiris was born of an egg. The Hindus and Buddhists in India do not eat eggs for similar reason.

The Madonna is another symbol, the Virgin Queen of Heaven, the Mother of the God with a baby in her arms. Although the Council of Ephesus in 431 A.D. declared Mary to be the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, but she was recognised as such in 813 A.D. and her immaculate conception was accepted by the Pope and council in 1851 A.D. still this emblem was universally accepted as a religious symbol amongst many nations like the Egyptians and the Hindus for ages before the birth of Christ. In India, Maya, the virgin mother of Buddha, and Devaki, the mother of Krishna, with infant saviours in their arms, were worshipped for centuries before the Christian era. Even today the Hindu Madonna is worshipped in many parts of India.

In Egypt, Isis, the mother of the saviour Horus, was worshipped as a virgin ; she was styled 'Our Lady', 'The Queen of Heaven', 'The Star of the Sea', 'The Mother of God', 'Immaculate Virgin'. Isis was also represented as standing on the crescent moon with her head surrounded by twelve stars ; so we have found in Roman Catholic cathedrals in Europe the statues and pictures of Mary, the Queen of Heaven, standing on the crescent moon, and her head surrounded by twelve stars. The crescent moon was the symbol of Isis and emblematic of the Hindu *Yoni,* the productive power of the mother nature.

This Crescent has now become the symbol of the Mohammedans ; it is placed on the top of mosques and tombs as well as on the banner of the Mohammedans. The five-pointed stars which they place on the top of the Crescent is the Pentacle. This is symbolical of *Purusha,* the male principle.

In ancient times in Egypt, the priests of Isis yearly dedicated to her a new ship laden with the first fruits of the spring. The Hindu priests even now gather the first crops of the harvest for the Queen of Heaven, Lakshmi (Ceres), and the ceremony

of floating on the bosom of the river small boats made up of the bark of the banana tree with lights in them is still observed in some parts of India.

The ancient Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Assyrians worshipped a virgin goddess with her son. She was called Mylitta and the name of her son was Tammuz, the saviour, who rose from the dead. Indeed, the worship of the Madonna played a most important part in the religious history of the world, before the Christian era. Some scholars explain that the Madonna represents the Dawn-goddess (*Usha* in the Vedas), the Queen of Heaven, who held her child, the new-born Sun-god, the saviour of the world. The 25th of March was celebrated throughout the ancient Grecian and Roman world in honour of the Mother of God, and even now it is called the *Lady Day* in Catholic countries. The 25th of December is held to be the birthday of Jesus the Christ, but this day was originally the Sun's birthday. At the commencement of the sun's apparent revolution round the earth, he was said to be born on the first moment after midnight on the 24th of December and it was celebrated among all pagan nations. It was afterwards accepted by the Christian Churches to decide the disputed date of the birth of Jesus the Christ, just as Sunday, the Sun's day, was introduced in place of the Jewish Sabbath, by Constantine the Great in 321 A.D.

There is a theory that the origin of the idea and worship of the saviour of the world, with all the mythological descriptions of the miraculous birth, deeds, death, and resurrection can be traced back to the worship of the Sun. We know that the worship of the Sun has played a very important part amongst the ancient nations in their religious worship. Among the ancient people the glory of the rising sun was considered to be the glory of the saviour of the world. Indeed, the glorious rising of the sun early in the morning inspires the soul and makes the soul think of it as the saviour of mankind, the giver of life. Nothing could have struck the minds of the primitive dwellers of this earth more strongly, nothing could have made deeper impressions on their hearts, than the rising sun at the dawn of time. Think of the wonderful powers of this self-luminous, celestial body that dispels the darkness of night, that awakens the eyes of man from sleep and his mind

from slumber, that brings activity in life and cheerfulness in the hearts of mankind. Is not the sunrise, to a child, the first wonder, the first beginning of all reflection ? Does it not inspire us with the feelings of reverence and devotion ? Does it not make our knees bend before the power, majesty, and glory of the self-effulgent illuminator of the world ?

In fact, the morning prayers and sacrifices of the ancient people were nothing but spontaneous expressions of the admiration, devotion, and gratitude of the primitive minds at the sight of the rising sun above the horizon. Can any of us wonder, why a simple unsophisticated man, standing alone on the sea-shore at the break of day, welcomes the rising sun, calls him the friend of humanity, the giver of light and warmth, the restorer of life, and the bestower of wealth and prosperity; or, when he salutes him and offers him everything that he possess, with the same spirit which we have when we offer anything to our best friend and benefactor ? No, we do not; because it is perfectly natural; human nature must express itself in some form or other, when no other object of worship was discovered; when there was no higher conception of the absolute Ruler of the universe, the sun stood before mankind like the image, face or eye of the unknown or unknowable Creator.

In the *Zend Avesta,* the scriptures of the Parsees, the sun is described as the mediator between God and man, and the saviour of the world from darkness and death. So, in Persia, the Sun was worshipped under the name of Mithra, and that worship played a great part amongst the early Christians. We find the remnants of Mithra worship in ancient Rome and many of the ceremonies amongst the Christians of today are but the modifications of those of Mithra worship. So, Osiris and Horus in Egypt, and Apollo and Hercules in Greece, were none other than the personifications of the glorious sun of the heavens. In the Vedas the sun is addresesd as the eye of the almighty Being; through that eye the infinite Being sees everything. It is the symbol of the eternal Being. It is for this reason that the emblem of the sun is to be found as a religious symbol among almost all nations.

Like the Sun, Fire has been a religious symbol from ancient times. In the Old Testament we read that Jehovah descended in fire. It is said: 'In the morning, that there were thunders

and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly.'[1]

This Fire-worship next to the Sun-worship was most widely diffused among different nations. In Persia and India, Egypt and Greece, it was the most common object of worship. The ancient form of worship consisted in pouring oblations on the sacrificial fire. Fire was considered to be the messenger of God, the carrier of oblations, the meditatoı between man and the supreme Being dwelling in heaven. It was believed that the bond of friendship between the worshipper and the invisible God could only be established by the smoke ascending from the fire-sacrifice. As the smoke ascended and gradually disappeared in the infinite space, the worshipper imagined that his offerings reached the invisible Being.

In fact, all the various forms of worship either in the form of lighted candles or of burning incense, or in any other form which we find today in Christian churches, and in the Buddhist or Hindu temples, are nothing but the remnants or modifications of the earlier form of the sacrificial worship in the Vedic period.

There were two kinds of sacrifice; the first was the sacrifice by shedding the blood and the second, the sacrifice performed by offering oblation to the fire. Before man learnt how to make and keep fire, he used to worship his deity by means of bloody sacrifices in which the blood of the victim, smeared to an image, a symbol or an altar, or exposed to the sun, represented the bond of kinship between the worshipper and his God; this was the origin of symbol or image-worship, or idolatry among the ancient Semitic tribes. We read in the Old Testament that the Jewish tribes after sacrificing an animal used to sprinkle that blood on the altar, and thus purified every object of offering and established the friendship of Yaveh.

[1] Exodus, XIX, 16-18.

In India, however, the other form of fire-sacrifice by the offering of oblations has been in existence from ancient times. During the Vedic period the Hindus invoked their *devas* or bright ones in the fire, and considered it to be the mouth of all *devas* as well as of supreme Being; so, whenever they poured oblations of clarified butter or of anything else, they believed that it was eaten by the divine Being.

The people of India are condemned as idolaters and their religion is called idolatry, because they use symbols and images at the time of devotional exercises. Are not the worshippers in other religions idolaters in the same sense? Here we must remember what Carlyle said regarding idol-worship in his *Heroes and Hero-worship*. The word 'idol' comes from the Greek word 'eidolon', which means 'a thing seen', a symbol. Thus Carlyle says: 'Idol is *eidolon*, a thing seen, a symbol. It is not God, but a symbol of God; and perhaps one may question, whether any the most benighted mortal ever took it for more than a Symbol. I fancy, he did not think that the poor image his own hands had made was God; but that God was emblemed by it, that God was in it some way or other. And now in this sense, one may ask, is not all worship, whatsoever a worship by symbols, or *eidola* or things seen? Whether *seen*, or rendered visible as an image or picture to the bodily eye, or visible only to the inward eye, to the imagination, or to the intellect; this makes a superficial, but no substantial difference. It is still a Thing Seen, significant of Godhead, an Idol.' The object of worship must be a thing, seen either by the physical, or by the mental eye. In this sense the picture or statue of Jesus the Christ or of the Cross is just as much an idol as the image of a Chinese god with twenty-four hands or ten heads, because it is a thing seen; it is an image; and it is not by itself a god, but God as symbolized by it.

Then, again, when a great prophet has seen God in a vision, he tries to make it known to others in what form he saw Him; then he makes a picture or statue, or tries to trace some likeness, and that statue or picture is afterwards taken as a symbol of the supreme human Being as He appeared to the prophet. The picture or statue is not worshipped, but the people worship that form, in which the prophet saw the divine human Being. Now the question arises: Is there any necessity of any

of these symbols at the time of worship ? Can we not worship the divine Being without using any kind of symbol or image, whether abstract or concrete ? Before we answer this, allow me to ask a few questions: Do we not use symbols at the time, when we read or write or think ? Can we write without symbols ? Can we speak without symbols ? Can we think without symbols ?

All we know is that the art of writing began with pictorial representations of abstract ideas that exist in our minds ; that every letter of the alphabet, every character is nothing but every word that we utter is the symbol of an idea or thought. Language itself is a framework of symbols and metaphors. Poetry, art, music, painting, sculpture are nothing but the concrete images or symbols of the abstract ideas and thoughts of our minds. If this be the fact, and if it be true that we can neither read, nor write, nor speak, nor think without symbols, then we ask, would it be possible for us to worship or pray to the unknown Being except through symbols ? No, it would be impossible. All religions and all philosophies are but the symbols of the divine principle, or the embodiment of abstract thoughts clothed with the garment of poetic language. After feeling the majesty, grandeur, and beauty of nature can a man suppress the welling forth of poetry from the profoundest depths of his soul ? Is not the essence of prayer and worship the spontaneous outburst of the feelings of our hearts, and also the imaging forth of the felt beauty and sublimity of the unknown supreme Being as manifested in nature?

Such poetic expressions of the human soul, animated by the perception of the power and glory of the infinite and almighty Being, are to be discovered at the bottom of all religious symbols and mythology. Can the limited human mind approach the infinite Being or think of His infinite powers, inexhaustible goodness, without forming a mental picture, which must be limited by its capacity, and by its power of comprehension ? The supreme Being who is the object of worship and devotion in all religions is infinitely greater than our highest conception of Him. From the lowest conception of God which we find in a primitive man, who thinks of Him as dwelling in the fire or in the water or in the sun, to the highest conception which the most cultured and advanced mind of a

philosopher can make of the omnipotent and omniscient Divinity, at every step, we find nothing but imperfect images of the perfect qualities and attributes of that eternal source of all perfection. And if anyone of us, however enlightened or advanced he may be, wishes to concentrate or meditate upon any of these divine attributes, he will have to start from one of these imperfect pictures, images, or symbols, either mental or concrete.

The more childish the mind of a man is, the greater is the necessity of concrete symbols for concentration and meditation at the time of devotional exercises. From concrete the mind rises to the abstract, and from abstract to the Absolute. It is for this reason that Vedanta does not condemn image-worship, or symbol-worship, or the worship of abstract pictures; on the contrary, it encourages the devotee to take any such symbol or image as inspires his mind with the divine ideal and uplifts him from this world of selfishness and corruption.

In Sanskrit these symbols and images are called *pratikas* and *pratimas,* which lead toward divinity, and which show the limitation of the human mind in trying to conceive of the divine attributes. In the *Upanishads* we read that the infinite Brahman, the eternal Being of the universe, should be worshipped, but the beginner may take fire, sun, spirit, mind, or word or logos as substitutes of the eternal and all-pervading Brahman, for concentration and meditation. The principal object for all such injunctions in the Vedanta is to direct the struggling man slowly towards the realization of the infinite Being, the Brahman or the eternal Reality of the universe, who alone should be worshipped by all nations. For the same reason, Vedanta encourages the image-worship of the Christians, the Buddhists, and all other dualistic believers of different religions, provided that such an image or symbol stands for the supreme Being or refers to any of His divine attributes.

According to Vedanta, there are five different ways by which the divine Being can be approached: the first is through the help of intellectual discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the eternal and the non-eternal, and through this discrimination, one may go beyond all phenomenal appearances and reach Brahman, the absolute, eternal Existence, Intelligence, and Bliss, from where all animate and inanimate

objects have come into existence, in which they live, and into which they return in the end. In this path there is no need of worship nor is there the necessity of a symbol, or an image whether concrete or mental.

Secondly, the divine Being may be apprehended as the one stupendous whole of which we are but parts. In this sense the gross physical universe is the body of the all-pervading Being. His mind is the cosmic mind; the cosmic intellect is His intellect; He sees through all eyes; He hears through all ears and thinks through all brains that exist in the universe; whether it is the brain of an insect or the brain of a god, both should be included in the cosmic mind.

Thirdly, the divine Being may be brought home to our hearts by the greatness, excellence, wisdom, and power of a particular incarnation like Christ, Krishna, Buddha, Rama, Ramakrishna, and others. Very few can really see God except through these divine manifestations in human forms. Because we are all human beings; it is exceedingly difficult for us to think of God without giving Him a human form and human attributes. If we try to think of God, we make Him human; we cannot go beyond the human from, for our conception of God is human and our explanation of the universe is human; and, therefore, a personal God of all dualistic religions is considered as with the attributes of a human being magnified to an infinite degree; but God understand the human failings and incarnates in a human form to manifest His divinity, greatness, power, and wisdom, and to do good to humanity.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* the Lord said: 'Whenever and wherever religion declines and irreligion prevails, I manifest Myself in a human form to establish righteousness, to destroy evil, and to protect mankind.'[1]

Fourthly, God can be worshipped as the Soul of our souls, as the Life of our lives; we can reach Him through our life, through our souls. He is the eternal Ruler of the universe, and from Him proceed life, intelligence, and all the best qualities that are to be found in the greatest of human beings.

Lastly, He may be apprehended and worshipped through symbols and images. Thus, God has many aspects and various

[1] *Bhagavad Gita, IV, 7.*

are the paths by which the individual souls can reach Him. It is said in Vedanta: 'The lowest form of worship is the worship of concrete symbols and external images, but, at the same time, it has its value to a childlike mind which cannot grasp abstract ideas and attributes of the divine Being; it is the lowest form of worship. Better than this is the worship of mental images accompanied by the repetition of the name of the Lord; in order to think of the divine attributes of the divine Being, we should repeat His holy name. Concentration and meditation upon the attributes of the Supreme is higher still; but the highest form of worship is that in which the individual is united with the Absolute, rising above thoughts, above all mental powers and mental functions.

When the individual communes with the infinite Being and feels that spiritual oneness, it is the highest form of worship; it is the state of superconsciousness, after attaining which the soul declares: 'I and my Father are one'.[1]

[1] उत्तमो ब्रह्मसद्भावो ध्यानभावस्तु मध्यमः।
स्तुतिजपोऽधमोभावो बाह्यपूजाऽधमाधमाः॥

–Atmajnana-nirnaya, 14.

CHAPTER V

EFFICACY OF PRAYER

From the very ancient times, in every country and in every age, there have been two classes of people: one class believes in the efficacy of prayer and insists upon all, declaring that prayer to God is absolutely necessary; while the other class denies that God ever hears our prayers and thinks that prayer is unnecessary and useless. Those who belong to the former class are known by different names, such as, theologians, religionists, theists, dualists, and so forth; and the latter includes all the philosophers, agnostics, sceptics, scientists, and the advanced thinkers of ancient and modern times.

Nowadays, along with the spread of scientific knowledge, the minds of the educated classes have generally become more or less sceptical regarding the efficacy of prayer; they do not believe in prayer; on the contrary, they believe that all those who think that their prayers are heard by God, are but ignorant fools; they ridicule them calling them superstitious. But in spite of all the ridicules and sarcasms of the agnostics, sceptics, philosophers, and scientists of modern times, we find in this world hundreds and thousands of theologians and dualists, who do pray to God and believe that their prayers are heard. Nearly all forms of religions with their various creeds, sects, and denominations, and all the scriptures of different nations unanimously uphold the necessity and efficacy of prayer.

The majority of the followers of these religious creeds shutting their ears to the remarks of the scientists still go on with their old habits of praying, and repeat those prayers which they have learnt from their childhood; and whether they believe that God listens to their saying or not, they do pray, because it is extremely difficult to do away with the impressions received in childhood. If a child's mind be impressed with the idea that God punishes those who do not pray at all, then that impression will linger for a long time, and may remain even when the child grows old and becomes famous in the world as a great sceptic or agnostic; and when he is left alone, or when

he is facing some danger or adverse circumstance, he falls back on that idea and cannot resist the impulse to repeat prayers which spontaneously come up to his mind.

All kinds of ordinary prayers presuppose an absolute faith in certain religious doctrines and dogmas, or in the authority of some scripture or some prophet or saviour and start with a belief in a personal God, who is considered to be the Creator and Governor of the universe, who is all-powerful, who can do whatever He chooses, who bears the cries and supplications of the human heart, who feels for and sends help to mankind, just in the same manner as an earthly father would lend a helping hand to his suffering child. In short, ordinary prayers depend entirely upon the conception of a personal God with human attributes and human feelings. The stronger the belief in a personal God with human feelings and attributes, the more fervent grows the prayer of the believer. The more human the conception of God is, the greater is felt the necessity of prayer.

Jesus the Christ believed in the efficacy of prayer, so did Mohammed. We find amongst the orthodox Christians, the Roman Catholics, for instance, who pray to God for help whether it be physical or mental, just in the same way as they pray to their saints or to the spirits of the dead, we have heard that, in a certain Catholic Church in New York City, there were hundreds of Catholics who prayed to God for good husbands for their daughters. They think ought they to pray to God for all the trifling matters of human life and they cannot get along without prayer. So also the Protestant Christians and the Mohammedans pour forth all the supplications of their hearts for obtaining supernatural help even in the trivial matters of their everyday life. They think that it is a great sin not to pray to God every day.

During the Boer war in South Africa, which was a war between different nations, the Churches of the rival and hostile camps prayed for victory and each believed that God would send victory to it. During the late war in Europe too, all the churches were reverberating with prayrs for victory and many people think that God heard their prayers and sent victory from heaven.

A Protestant Christian will pray once a week or perhaps

once a day. But a Mohammedan prays five times a day. He must obey the calls to prayer at the appointed hour leaving aside all other works for at least five minutes. Amongst the Buddhists, prayer is an essential form of their devotion. Although Buddha himself did not believe in a personal God with human attributes, nor teach his disciples to pray to any supernatural Being, still his followers could not restrain their minds from praying to Buddha himself, whenever they wanted any kind of help which they could not expect to get from any earthly being. Thus, in course of time, there grew amongst the Buddhists a strong belief that prayer is one of the most necessary items of devotion and worship.

The Buddhists in Tibet invented the labour-saving prayer-wheels. In Tibet not only in temples but on road-sides, market-places, and prominent localities, they have public prayer-wheels which are turned by the hands of the passers-by, or by water-power or by winds. The Parsees or the Zoroastrians, and the Hindus in general believe in the efficacy of prayer, and they pray with earnestness, sincerity, and faith.

Thus we see that although the number of students of modern science who are atheistic, agnostic, and sceptical is increasing, still the masses everywhere believe in the efficacy of prayer—in the efficacy of the conscious and subconscious cries from human hearts and that God hears the prayers and fulfils them through His divine grace. The cry for help spontaneously comes out of the human heart, whenever we are in need of certain things and we feel that these things cannot be obtained through ordinary human efforts. Amongst ourselves, we find, when a man is conscious of his own weakness and helplessness, he first of all seeks help from outside, such as his friends, relatives, or neighbours; but, when he fails to get it from them, he cries out in despair, appeals to his Maker, and asks for His favour and mercy. As a baby cries out instinctively, as it were, with a loud scream to draw the attention of its mother, when it needs any help, so, when a man instinctively cries out for supernatural help, we say he is praying. Thus, a man is said to be praying, when, seeking for supernatural help, he pours forth the supplications of his heart with earnestness and sincerity by uttering the praises of his Maker and bending his knees with the expression of humility and gratitude, in order

to draw the attention of his Heavenly Father. Such a man believes that by appealing to God through prayer he will receive the help he needs.

There are different kinds of prayer. We may pray for material benefits, whenever we are in need. When we are suffering from any severe illness which no human power can cure, we pray to God for our speedy recovery. When we are placed under adverse circumstances and find no one else to help us, we seek supernatural help and cry out; and that cry is our prayer. Often, when we have performed certain acts and do not know what results we are going to reap, or, when we face some impending dangers, we pray to God for the removal of these dangers, or for the fulfilment of our desires in such a way as will make us happy, or will make us realize what we want. Therefore, extremely adverse circumstances have the power to arouse that attitude of the human mind which spontaneously bursts forth in the form of a prayer.

Sometimes we pray for something, and, when we get that thing, we do not like it. Prosperity often makes us unmindful to prayers. When we have got everything we need, we do not feel the necessity of prayer. The form of prayer which consists in asking of God: 'Oh Lord, give me this, give me that,' is like the prayer of a beggar to a wealthy person for food, clothes, and other necessaries of life. The moment a beggar obtains everything he needs, and feels satisfied, he does not care to come to that wealthy person anymore; and as, in course of time, he forgets the donor and giver, so a man who prays to God for material benefits and comforts, forgets Him, when his circumstances are changed. This kind of begging is the lowest form of prayer.

There is another kind of prayer. When a man, after violating any of the commandments of God, written in a scripture, which he believes to be the word of God, remembers the punishment that is awating him for such a violation, he gets frightened. Then he begins to repent for his acts, and through fear of punishment, he appeals to the mercy of the Lord, who has fixed the punishment for the violation of His commands, with a strong conviction that, if he could draw the attention of God, He, the Maker of laws, would surely, through mercy, make his case an exception to the general rule. This kind

of prayer is like the crying of a criminal before the court of justice for mercy. This earnest appeal to the divine mercy for pardon and forgiveness is called a prayer. It is another form of begging. The violation of the commands of God generally proceeds from moral weakness and from temporary forgetfulness of the law by which God inflicts punishment and suffering upon the evil-doer.

There is still another form of prayer which is a mere expression of gratitude and thanksgiving for what we eat, drink, and enjoy in our life. This prayer proceeds from the idea that the Heavenly Father, having created us out of nothing, takes proper care of us, provides us with food, and gives us all pleasures, comforts, and enjoyments of life, just as an earthly father does for his son. As a son ought to be grateful and thankful to his father who after begetting him feeds him, takes care of him, and gives him pleasure in every way; so we ought to be thankful and grateful to our Heavenly Father for all blessings we have received of Him. All of us are quite familiar with this form of prayer, as it is largly practised in the Christian communities. This form of thanksgiving and expression of gratitude is, of course, much better than the other two forms of prayer, which are nothing but simple begging for material benefits or for exemption from punishment. Thus we can understand clearly how prayer depends upon the conception of a personal Creator with human attributes. If we did not believe in a personal God who feels and suffers for us, there would be no necessity of praying to Him either for favour or through thankfulness.

Now let us consider the arguments of those who do not believe in the necessity of prayers. In the first place, they deny the existence of a personal God with human qualities. They say that such a God with human attributes does not exist, except in the minds of those who believe in Him. It is an anthropomorphic conception. We create an image, project our thoughts, and then worship Him; thus it is the projection of human qualities and the personification of human ideas which depend entirely upon human minds. Consequently, according to these thinkers, such a human God was created by the imagination of the uncultured and supersitious human minds. They say that in this universe nothing can happen

without a cause ; there is no such thing as supernatural agency. Everything that is called supernatural is, in fact, natural. The phenomena of the universe are produced by natural causes and governed by natural laws. God, if He exists at all, cannot be persuaded by prayers, flattery, or sacrifice to change the laws of nature which are uniform and eternal ; if we try to persuade God, it is only a mistake, it is a superstition. God cannot change the laws. There is nothing in the universe which happens through the whim of a personal God. So the belief, that God hears our prayers or that prayers will bring us this or that, is, according to these thinkers, simply a superstitious belief of uncultivated persons, who do not understand the laws of nature. They say that ignorant people generally mistake the fulfilment of their prayers for the effects of natural causes governed by natural laws.

Our longings and emotions have nothing to do with the external events of nature. When we cannot trace the proper cause of a certain event which occurs in nature, and when any such event happens to coincide accidentally with our desires and longings, then by mistake we ascribe its cause to the verbal expressions of our desires and longings.

All scientists and philosophers, sceptics, and agnostics reject the belief that God answers to our prayers by producing miraculous events in nature. The time for miracles has passed away ; there is no room for miracles in this world which is governed by the law of causation. Science has proved that the phenomena of nature are linked together with that eternal law of cause and effect. Nothing can be produced without that law, and physical events are produced only by physical causes, which are entirely independent of mental conditions, or their verbal expressions which we call prayers. Events of nature are produced and governed by the laws on the physical plane ; nothing can change that.

Moreover, these scientists who hold the belief in the theory of evolution, deny creation out of nothing by some extra-cosmic Being, and try to explain the origin of prayer, by saying that, in ancient times, the uncultivated minds of savage tribes believed in the existence of a personal God, who produced this world out of nothing by His will and performed miracles, in order to convince people of His greatness and make them believe that He

was the governor and ruler of the universe ; consequently, whenever these people wanted to see any miracle, they prayed to Him, expressing their gratitude and uttering the praise of the almighty God. That is the cause of all these beliefs in prayer. But now, owing to the advancement of modern science, we do not have to believe in this way. Science has explained by discovering the laws of nature that creation out of nothing is an impossibility, and that belief in the intervention of supernatural will or power is a mere superstition. Therefore, prayer for supernatural help is unnecessary.

It is for this reason that we find scientists, agnostics, and some of the philosophers to deny the efficacy of prayer and laugh at those who believe in the dogma that, God does hear and answer to our prayers. And the result is that they have given up those religious creeds which teach such erroneous dogmas. They would not believe in miracles, nor in the authority of some person's sayings. They want rational explanations for everything which they would accept. They say, if we throw aside all these dogmas and other proofs, then the belief in prayer will be left without any support. It must fall to pieces. So, there is no necessity of prayer at all. Such is the conclusion of the scientific and rationalistic minds who do not believe in prayers. They do not see any good which can be derived from prayers.

In India all these objections have been raised and all these questions have been discussed by the seers of truth from a very early period. The unbiased and scientific minds of those ancient seers of truth understood the laws of nature and tried to explain all events, external and internal, by referring to those laws. They did not think for a moment that the laws of nature could be suddenly changed by the whim of a personal God ; nor did they believe in an extra-cosmic Creator ; nor in the creation out of nothing ; but still they did not entirely deny the efficacy of prayer.

The writings of all these great sages and seers are known as philosophies, of which the Vedanta philosophy is the highest and most rational ; it embraces all the ultimate conclusions of modern science, but, at the same time, it does not deny the efficacy of prayer. Like modern science, Vedanta had rejected, long before the dawn of scientific knowledge in the West, the belief in the worship of an anthropomorphic personal God.

The God of Vedanta is not a personal Being dwelling in heaven, outside the universe, but He is all-pervading, immanent, and resident in nature. His Will is the supreme power in the universe and is one with the eternal Energy. When this Energy, through the process of evolution, manifests itself as the various forces of the external and internal world, Vedanta philosophy says, these are like so many expressions of that one and all-pervading will. And the laws of nature are nothing but the modes by which that almighty Will or eternal Energy operates in this universe.

By denying the anthropomorphic conception of God, Vedanta has thrown overboard all the ideas that prayers will persuade God to change our environments and those laws which govern the phenomena. Vedanta has also rejected the idea that repentance, weeping, and wailing will touch the heart of God and draw from Him mercy and forgiveness and those who shall not do so shall be deprived of His grace and pardon and shall have to suffer eternally after death. It has also shown that praises, thanksgiving, sacrifices, offerings of incense and fragrant flowers or words of flattery do not affect the absolute divine mind of the Almighty. Vedanta says that God cannot be bribed by these.

Here it may be asked, if God does not hear our prayers, nor change His laws, then how will Vedanta explain the sudden cure of diseases and other effects, which generally come through prayer? As regards the objective efficacy of prayer which we so often hear, such as the sudden cure of diseases, changes of the physical conditions by prayers or the attainment of things which one needs and so forth, Vedanta says that although these physical effects are ascribed to prayers as their cause, still they are, in reality, bound and governed by natural laws, the laws of cause and effect, of action and reaction ; and so they are only the results of the law of causation in this universe. These physical events are not the results of prayer in its true sense, but may be of strong desires which are fulfilled by the law of demand and supply. The monistic explanation of Vedanta admits one set of causation in the phenomenal universe and not two. There are no two sets of causes, as the scientists affect to believe that one set is physical and the other set is mental ; but the Vedanta philosophy teaches that both these sets are the

expressions of one set, and, consequently, there is one set of causes in the universe. The scientists, who do not believe in the monistic principles, say that nature and mind are two separate things. There are also materialists who hold that mind is the result of matter; they try to trace the cause of mind to matter and material forces or their combination; consequently, they give no value to psychical changes. But according to Vedanta, mind is the cause, or the casual agent, and all causation first begins in the mind.

Will-power is the highest in the universe and there is no other power greater than it. The power which is manifested on the physical plane can be governed by will-power. The tremendous power of electricity and steam can be brought under control by the will-power of man; all the physical powers are subject to will-power, which is the first expression of mind. Mind is not the result of matter; it may be material on the higher plane, because mind is also finer matter in vibration; but still, it is not the effect of the forces that are manifested on the gross physical plane.

Every mental change has its corresponding physical change. When desires first arise in our minds, they have tremendous power; they have the power of changing the physical conditions. Every new thought creates new changes in the brain, produces new brain cells, and, consequently, introduces a change in the whole nervous system. And when the nervous system is changed, its relation to the external environments also changes. It will seek such environments as are favourable to, and helpful for the manifestation of its changed condition. Of course, ordinary minds cannot recognize such minute changes. But, however, subtle the changes may be, their efforts are tremendous and they mould the whole nature and character of an individual.

If a person indulge in evil thoughts and allows these to rise in his mind and govern him, the whole action of his mind and body will take a corresponding change and will accordingly mould his nature. These evil thoughts will not stop until the results will come through the law of causation, or the law of cause and sequence. The results may be physical or mental. If the evil thoughts which rise in the mind of persons be harboured for a long time, these thoughts will affect

the minds of other persons, with whom they are intimately connected, and conditions as will agree with their ideas and thoughts. Just as a wave will not subside entirely, but will go on producing a current, so when a new thought rises in our minds, it creates a kind of wave in the ocean of universal mind, and then that current influences the minds of other persons and ultimately comes back to the centre from which it started, and brings the results, either in the form of good or bad. Thus every mental act by the law of action and reaction must react upon itself in some way or other and bring similar results.

Mental changes must manifest themselves on the physical plane, and if the mental changes have no corresponding physical medium, they will not express themselves so readily until they create a proper medium. For instance, if I have a desire to write a letter, that desire is in my mind and the thoughts are in my mind also; but the physical conditions must be there; otherwise I cannot write. So, in order to get the material expression of that desire and the thoughts, I must have pen, ink, paper, and other requisites. Even a spirit that wishes to communicate with the beings of this earth cannot do it without the help of pen, or other materials;[1] so also, if I have a strong desire to write, I shall do my best to get these materials, and then put my thoughts into words and write the letter. Where all the conditions are favourable, the thought is expressed; but if my hand become paralysed at that time, in spite of all the conditions being favourable, it will be impossible for me to write. That paralysis may be temporary or permanent. If it be temporary, it may be cured either by mental power in the form of a strong desire, or by removing the clot of blood and the obstacles that prevent the activity of motor nerves. Prayer is nothing but a mental desire, which generates new currents in the system and these currents produce certain results, showing that mental power is stronger in many cases than that which can be obtained through drugs. But if the organs be completely destroyed in some way or other, then no

[1] But so far as spiritual communication is concerned, there are exceptional cases where spirits can directly communicate. I remember in this connection how an independent voice in a seance in the house of Sir Alfred Turner addressed us: 'Good Evening, Brother.'

amount of prayer can remove that condition. No Christian scientist nor any faith-healer will be able to cure that case of paralysis.

It is for this reason that Vedanta says that those desires which are in harmony with the laws of nature are surely fulfilled sooner or later. If I have a desire to fly in the air, that desire will not be fulfilled until I have wings. One may fly in a dream or in an aeroplane. But it will not be the fulfilment of that particular desire. If we know that all desire are governed by the natural law of cause and sequence, and if we make our desire harmonize with natural laws, we are sure to get the results; and what we ordinarily call prayer is nothing but the expression of our intense desires. Desires and will-power being the the causes, end in producing similar results; being actions, they produce similar reactions.

Desire bring their results more quickly, when they are attended with a strong faith in their fulfilment and that faith is strengthened by the belief that God hears what we say. It is for this reason that all the dualistic religions insist upon praying with a firm belief. But the Vedanta philosophy does not call these expressions of our desires as true prayers. These desires we may mistake for prayer and these verbal expressions of our desires, we may say, have been heard by God. But the thing is, if we want anything, that demand will bring the result by the law of demand and supply. Thus leaving all the physical effects of such longings of the human heart in the domain of natural laws, such as the law of causation, the law of action and reaction, the Vedanta philosophy tells us that this is a phenomenal world governed by phenomenal laws, and then goes on to describe what true prayer is and how God listens to our true prayed.

According to Vedanta, begging for material objects, either in the shape of prosperity or in the form of success, or of name and fame, is not a true kind of prayer. A child of the omnipotent Spirit begging for toys of the world—what a degeneration of the mortal man! God does not hear such prayers; they are fulfilled through natural laws. The desire for freedom from punishment is not true prayer; because that freedom will not come, before we have reaped the results of our acts. Suffering is nothing but the result of the reaction of our own action. If

we have committed certain deeds, God cannot give us freedom from the punishment. Thanksgiving is not true prayer. God does not care for thanks. The expression of the feeling of buoyancy for the enjoyment of sense pleasures or giving thanks to the Maker is not true prayer according to Vedanta. We have come to this world by the natural law to fulfil our desires, and to reap the results of all the works done in our previous incarnation. We are responsible for all the sufferings and pleasures of this life. So, whether we thank God or not, we shall have to reap the results, and it does not make any difference to God.

True prayer is the mental and verbal expression of the highest spiritual ideal. It consists not in trying to get anything from outside, but in unfolding the higher powers that are slumbering within the soul. It is the expression of that determination of the individual soul for reaching the highest goal of life; it is the constant desire, or constant aim, or constant thought of attaining to the highest spiritual realization. When we rise above all ordinary desires and do not seek the fulfilment of such desires, then we are ready for true prayer. True prayer is the prayer of the individual soul, or the soul of the apparent man to the spiritual or divine Self or God, who dwells within us; it comes to the soul which is awakened to the transitory and ephemeral character of the phenomenal universe, and which longs for freedom from selfishness and all wordly imperfections that give us trouble and make us unhappy in this life.

True prayer is said to be heard by the supreme Being when we remember our spiritual nature. Think of it and try to realize it in this life, by unfolding the higher nature that is dwelling in you. When an earnest soul longs for spiritual illumination and prays for the manifestation of higher powers that are latent, then the divine Spirit, which is the Soul of our souls, is said to hear that prayer from within and not from outside; and then it manifests its nature. A true prayer is the expression of that attitude of the human mind which arouses the divine nature in man and makes it govern the lower, selfish, or animal nature, by which we are directed in our ordinary life to perform selfish acts. According to Vedanta lip-prayer is no prayer at all. True prayer is always mental. It is the earnest longing of the heart. It rises in that un-

disturbed mind which seeks higher enlightenment, knowledge, freedom, and perfection.

True prayer is the expression of the determined efforts of the human mind to conquer, subdue, and control the lower self. It is the soliloquy of the awakened soul. When the soul is awakened, it looks at the facts of life from a different standpoint, compares them with the highest ideal, and wants to be in tune with that perfect ideal. We must live in freedom and have perfect control of mind and body; and in trying to attain to that state, if we find that there are overwhelming attractions of the lower self which drag us down to the plane of animal nature, we make a strong determination to overcome those obstacles by knocking at the door of that Spirit, which is the storehouse of all power and strength; that knocking is, according to Vedanta, the true prayer of the soul. Whether we make any verbal expression of our determination for the realization of Truth or not, when that knocking comes, then the soul is ready to enter into the domain of spiritual Truth; and, at that time, the door opens, and the individual soul is allowed to enter into the abode of infinite peace and it gains divine communion with the supreme Spirit dwelling within us. Then unbounded spiritual strength comes to the soul and it overcomes all the obstacles and obstructions that prevent it from realizing the ideal or from making its own nature harmonize with the Divine. Then it is said that true prayer is heard and answered by the supreme Being.

God does not hear the expressions of our desires; but when we long for that emancipation, which is the highest ideal of life and try to attain it with a strong determination, then that true prayer of ours is fulfilled. True prayer is the first expression of the intense longing for freedom from all limitations. It must always be attended with absolute faith and conviction and with the concentration upon the meaning of what one utters. Mind must not think of anything else at that time. True prayer is but the contemplation of the divine nature by mentally repeating the ideal in words. Whenever we think of anything, we think in words; and when we mentally repeat the name of the ideal, concentrating our mind on it, that prayer is the true prayer. It is another form of meditation. And when such a meditation or true prayer leads

to the realization of the divine Spirit, then it is said that prayer is heard. True prayer is like the ladder by which the individual soul ascends to the domain of transcendental Reality. And when that state is reached the soul becomes free and it no longer prays to any being, whether supernatural or natural, because all its prayers are now fulfilled. It gains eternal peace, happiness, knowledge, and bliss. Thus a man, who has realized divinity in himself and has purged out all ideas of separateness, has obtained the efficacy of true prayer. Such a man never begs for anything.

True prayer brings to the soul enlightenment and wisdom, dwelling latent in every individual. It is the means by which that latent force is roused. Thus, having attained the subjective value of true prayer, the individual soul begins to feel the relation which it bears to the supreme Being, learns to surrender its will to the cosmic Will that moves the phenomena of the universe and governs all the physical and material forces, and ultimately becomes the playground of the almighty Will. Then he feels that his mind and intellect are but instruments in the hands of the almighty Being.

But so long the individual soul, covered by the veil of ignorance and enchained by selfish passion, does not manifest divinity in every action, it should struggle for the attainment of perfection, and should remember its highest ideal through meditation and true prayer; and the best form of such a prayer said by the ancient Vedic sages is:

असतो मा सद्गमय, तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय,
मृत्योर्माऽमृतं गमय, आविरावीर्म एधि
रुद्र यत्ते दक्षिणं मुखं तेन मां पाहि नित्यम्।

'O Soul of our souls! O Light of the universe! Lead us from unreal to Real, from darkness to Light, from death to Immortality! Reveal unto us thorough and thorough. O destroyer of all evil! Protect us with Thy compassionate Face, remove all obstacles that prevent the manifestation of Thy divine Power and do not let us forget that our true nature is one with Thee forever and ever.'

CHAPTER VI

ECSTASY

The scientific investigations of the Psychical Research have opened new vistas of our soul-life and have unveiled many of the mysteries regarding the powers and possibilities of the human soul. They have given wonderful demonstrations regarding the existence of the soul as an entity, distinct and separable from the physical organism, through which it manifests itself on the material plane. They have given scientific explanations of spirit communications and have confirmed our belief in the existence of a spiritual world. Some of these investigators, like Dr. Myers, the author of *Human Personality,* have gone so far as to admit that the embodied spirits, under certain conditions, do vacate the physical organism, either partially or completely, in order to allow another disembodied spirit to enter into and take possession of it, in the same manner as the primitive people of different countries believed in ancient times. The old idea of possession by disembodied spirits is no longer ridiculed by such great thinkers of modern times. Not only do they admit this, but they also maintain that it is possible for the embodied souls to leave the body and wander in spiritual space, while the physical organism remains senseless in a trance-like condition. In this state the soul's perception is not confined to the sense plane or to the objects of the material world; but, transcending them, it perceives the visions of the spiritual world. The seer, then, enters into the realms higher than anything that is to be found on this plane. This excursion of the embodied spirit from the physical form to the spiritual world with its spiritual perception is called ecstasy.

It is a faculty distinct from any other that we ordinarily see or hear of. It is a peculiar faculty of the soul different from that of spirit communication or spirit control or possession by spirit or trance or hypnotic sleep. The outward condition of the physical organism in ecstasy may resemble, to a certain extent, the sound sleep or the trance-like state, but, subjectively,

the soul reaches a consciousness which is higher than the sense-consciousness, a consciousness of the spiritual realm, while the sense-consciousness remains absolutely in abeyance. Of course, it is true that in the case of spirit control or possession the sense-consciousness of a man is also in abeyance; although, on this point, there is an outward resemblance between ecstasy and possession, still the latter is distinguished from ecstasy by the fact that another discarnate spirit or spirits invade the organism and utilize every part of the body of one who is possessed. In ecstasy, however, neither such invasion nor possession by another spirit takes place. The body and senses remain motionless and unconscious of the surroundings, while the soul, being freed, obtains glimpses of higher truths and has spiritual visions.

There have been innumerable instances of individual souls who have reached this state of ecstasy, and have realized, on the spiritual plane, truths which are transcendental. The religious history of the world is filled with descriptions of the ecstatic visions and experiences of the prophets, seers, and saints of different countries. In the Old Testament we read how Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, and other Jewish prophets saw visions of the spiritual world in ecstasy. In the New Testament is described the ecstasy of Jesus the Christ, St. John, and St. Paul.

The *Koran* says that Mohammed was carried in ecstasy to the seventh heaven by the angel Gabriel, and in that state Mohammed saw the truths of the spiritual world, and afterwards described those experiences to his followers. Mohammed, although was an illiterate man, received all revelations in his ecstasy, and these revelations were afterwards embodied in the *Koran,* the scriptures of the Mohammedans.

Zoroaster (Zarathustra) became the founder of Zoroastrianism after receiving his revelations in ecstasy. These revelations formed the scriptures of the Zoroastrians, called the *Zend Avesta.* Ahura Mazda, the great God, spoke with Zoroaster in ecstasy, and the latter heard His voice and received His commands. If you read the *Zend Avesta,* you will find that Ahura Mazda was the speaker and Zoroaster the enquirer.

Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, went in his ecstasy to all the spiritual spheres or *lokas* or heavens and experienced those wonderful truths, which he afterwards preached before

the world. Many of his disciples and followers entered into that same state of ecstasy at different times.

In India, there have been countless prophets, saints and seers (*rishis*) from time immemorial. Each one of them reached the state of ecstasy and realized transcendental truths of the spiritual world. Emanuel Swedenborg is said to have discovered the Law of Correspondences in ecstasy. He saw in his spiritual visions the glimpses of heaven and hell; he heard the voices of angels and archangels associated with them, and experienced many things which he afterwards described in the pages of his voluminous works. Some of the great philosophers of ancient Greece, like Socrates, Plato, Plotinus, and others claimed to have seen spiritual truths in ecstasy. Great poets like Virgil Dante, Milton, Wordsworth, and Tennyson saw visions in ecstasy. It is said that Immanuel Kant, the great German philosopher, had an experience of it. The Persian poets Sadi, Hafiz, Jalaluddin, and other Sufi philosophers considered that ecstasy was the state where the soul reached divine communion. The Arab philosopher Al-Ghazzali attained to ecstasy and described it as a state higher than any other state of consciousness. St. Teresa and Jeanne d'Arc both enjoyed the bliss of ecstasy. Some of the Christian mystics of the middle ages like St. Bernard, Eckhart, and others attained to ecstasy and described their experiences.

Thus we can understand how universally accepted is this state of ecstasy. The evidence for it is stronger than that of any other religious state. It is the one spiritual experience of the soul which is common to all religions. All religions may vary in their dogmas and doctrines, in their ideals, but, in this state of ecstasy, they are one. No one can deny its existence, because it has been the foundation upon which the structures of all great and small religions have been built.

In this state have come all revelations of God, as well as the knowledge of celestial pleasures and happiness; otherwise, how could we know that there is such a thing as heaven, and that the heavenly pleasures are more desirable than the earthly ones, if this knowledge did not come to us in a certain state of consciousness? The aim of all religions is to lead the individual soul to the realization of the supreme Being through the gate of ecstasy. The particular experiences in individual cases may vary, and the moral and spiritual interpretations of ecstatic

visions may be different in each case and may be governed by the preconceived ideas and superstitions of individuals; but, at the same time, no one can deny the fact that the embodied spirit, withdrawing its consciousness from the physical body and from the material world, perceives spiritual and transcendental truths.

Ecstasy is entirely a subjective phenomenon. There is no objective sign other than the trance-like condition of the physical body. It is true, however, that there are different kinds of ecstasy, and that there are various stages in it. In ecstasy every higher emotion is quickened to its climax, at the sight of the consummation of divine beauty and divine love. There is a kind of ecstasy in which tears of joy and blissfulness run down the cheeks of the seer, the face becomes radiant with divine lustre and a heavenly smile. The seer may talk in an unknown tongue, and after regaining sense-consciousness, may dance with extreme joy and blissfulness. This state of ecstasy is called in Sanskrit *bhava*. It comes to the soul of the devotee at the sight of his spiritual ideal whom he worships through love and extreme devotion, to whom he has offered his whole heart and soul, and beyond whom he thinks, there is nothing greater or higher. These outward signs are visible, when the spirit retains a partial connection with the physical organism; but when the connection is entirely cut off, the body remains senseless like a dead body.

St. Teresa, the Spanish saint of the sixteenth century, described the different stages of her ecstasy. She states: 'In the sixth stage of ecstasy the body grows cold, speech and respiration are suspended; the eyes close; the slightest motion may cause the greatest efforts.' Then she describes a state higher than this. She asks: 'What is there beyond ecstasy?' And she answers: 'The union with God. This is accomplished suddenly and violently, but with such force that we should strive in vain to resist the impetuous onset. God has now descended into the substance of the soul and has become one with it.' Thus she realized the union with God through ecstasy.

In India the *bhaktas*, or those who follow the path of love and devotion, attain to this state of union with God which they call *mahabhava* or the highest state of ecstasy. There have been many in India who have reached that state. Radha, the consort

of Krishna, Chaitanya, the great saint and divine incarnation, who was a contemporary of Luther, and who preached the science of divine love, and Sri Ramakrishna attained to this state of ecstasy. Their spiritual experiences are the illustrations of *mahabhava* in the religious history of India.

In ecstasy, the eagle of the individual soul, being freed from the cage of the physical body, soars high in the spiritual firmament of the infinite Being. The freedom and happiness, which then come, are unbounded, the range of perception becomes infinitely expanded, and the soul realizes the transcendental environment in the place of the material. Then he says, as Eckhart said: 'And if His nature and essence and substance are mine, I am the son of God.' In the highest state of ecstasy the liberated soul rising above all limitations enters into the abode of the Infinite and eventually becomes one with it. Plotinus, the great Neo-Platonist, who lived nearly two centuries after Christ, attained to this state of ecstasy four times in his life. He says to his friend Flaccus: 'You ask, how can we know the Infinite? I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The Infinite, therefore, cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer, in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite anxieties. Like only can apprehend like. When you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite. In the reduction of your soul to its simplest self, its divine essence, you realize this union, nay, this identity.'[1] This ecstasy was called by Dionysius, who flourished in the fifth century, the state of the mystic union when the soul is united with God. Describing the nature of this state of ecstasy the great German Christian mystic Meister Eckhart, who flourished in the fourteenth century, also said: 'There must be perfect stillness in the soul before God can whisper His word into it, before the light of God can shine in the soul, and transform the soul into God. When all passions are stilled and all worldly desires silenced, then the word of God can be heard in the soul.' It is not merely silence from external noise, but that tranquil state

[1] Plotinus's *Letters to Flaccus.*

of mind which is undisturbed by desires and passions. How can we expect to commune with God, when our minds are all the time occupied with thousand other things of the world? The secret chamber of the soul of an ordinary man or woman is packed up from the ceiling to the floor with thoughts and ideas that are worldly, with desires and passions of the flesh; there is not an inch of space left vacant; and still we wonder why God does not come to us, why we have not attained God-consciousness. We do not think for a moment that we have left no room for God in the secret chamber of our soul. How can we invite God in that crowded room, when we know that it is not fit even for the visit of a mortal guest? Therefore, a seeker after God should, in the first place, clear the chamber of the soul and make room for the divine guest. He should purify its atmosphere by introducing the vibrations of holy thoughts and spiritual ideas. He should cleanse the floor with tears of repentance for the wrong committed during ignorance, employ the guard of right discrimination, and keep constant watch to prevent the impure and unholy thoughts from crossing the threshold of that sacred chamber. He should exercise dispassion and should not be attracted by the pleasures of senses, or objects of desires and earthly ambition. Then, with childlike simplicity of heart and extreme earnestness and sincerity, he should send prayers of invitation to the Lord eagerly longing to see Him, and with concentrated attention, he should look for His arrival expecting to receive Him every minute with the same feeling as a true lover has, when he expects to see his beloved who has been absent for a long time. As the tremendous longing of a true lover makes him impatient and forces this scattered energy of his mind to flow through one channel toward his beloved, so the mind of the true lover of God should be concentrated and one-pointed, and its current should constantly flow toward the divine ideal. At that time nothing of the world would satisfy the longing of his soul. Wherever there is such a strong longing, there the approach to the Divinity is at hand. The stronger the longing, the quicker is the realization. This ecstasy is very rare, but it is the only state, in which the infinite Being can be realized face to face. The old question whether we can realize the Infinite face to face and the answer to that question we find in the Old Testament. There it is said that no one can live

after seeing God.[1] It is true to a certain extent, because physically one must be dead in that state. The body will remain like a dead body, but the soul will realize the Infinite and afterwards will become one with it.

Here it may be asked, if ecstasy be the condition of the consciousness of the Infinite and of the realization of spiritual truths, and, if it be so universally accepted, how can it be attained? Is there any method by which one can acquire it? There are various methods by which it can be reached. These methods are fully described in Vedanta. Vedanta analyses all these methods by which the different souls of different countries have attained to it and have realized the infinite Being. It also classifies them according to their nature and each of these methods is called a Yoga or path in Vedanta.

Bhakti Yoga, or the path of love and devotion, is the easiest of all. Love and devotion are like the two wings by which the bird of the human soul flies out of the cage of the physical body and soars high in the spiritual atmosphere of the infinite Being and enjoys ecstatic happiness. This path has been followed by the majority of the great seers of different countries, who entered into ecstasy. If we examine the lives of all these great saints and prophets, their religious exercises and the methods by which they attained to ecstatic realization, we shall find that love and devotion were at the bottom of them all. The fire of true love and devotion for the Supreme burns all earthly ties and consumes everything which the devotee claims as his own. It is a tremendous fire. Few possibly have realized what that fire of true love is. It acts in the system like high fever. The tongue becomes fever-dry and the blood runs like fire, creating heat and a burning sensation in the body, which can be quenched by no earthly object. The all-consuming fire of love destroys sleep before ecstasy comes. Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna did not sleep for twelve years, when his whole soul was burning with the fire of love. At one time he suffered for several months from this unbearable burning sensation in his whole body. He used to plunge himself in the Ganges and remain there for hours; but, alas! the cold water of the Ganges failed to put

[1] And he said: 'Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.'

—Exodus, XXXIII. 20.

out that fire of love, which was burning upon the altar of his heart within the body; nothing could quench that fire.

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, the latest divine manifestation of the present age, showed in his life all the stages of ecstasy as described in the passages of the religious history of the world. His whole life was like a continuous chain of the different states of ecstasy. It was natural with him, while with others ecstasy was a rare accomplishment coming through hard and long-standing practice. The first ecstasy that came to him was, when he was six or seven years old, after seeing the glorious colouring of a tropical cloud, in the background of which a flight of snow-white cranes flew, and that took him out of the body. His body fell motionless and that experience he never forgot during his lifetime. He always used to mention that state, and whenever anyone would ask him, what ecstasy was like, he would immediately go into that state; and we have seen in him the highest state of ecstasy, *mahabhava,* in which his body would remain like a dead body, his pulse and heart-beat would stop for the time being, and his spirit would leave the prison of the body and commune with the Infinite. Once he fell in a bowl of burning charcoal and a live coal struck him on the shoulder, and it burnt almost an inch deep into the flesh. He had no sensation then, and he did not feel it; and that shows how he could separate himself entirely from the body. Yet he was not possessed by any other spirit at that time; it was not an obsession, not a trance; it was a state of ecstasy. When he would remain in that state, his soul would leave his body and enter into the abode of the Infinite. Sometimes, he would speak in an unknown tongue, which no one could understand. Coming down from that height and regaining his sense-consciousness sometimes, he would dance with extreme joy and blissfulness and relate his experiences. He had the power of rousing ecstasy in his disciples by a single touch. He used to say that the joy and happiness in that state of ecstasy can be compared to the indescribable joy and happiness of a live fish which, after being taken out of water, finds itself back in water. Can you imagine the happy condition of such a fish? Sri Ramakrishna used to say that in ecstasy the soul finds its real home, where it enjoys absolute freedom from all bondage.

The state of ecstasy, described as *samadhi* or superconscious-

ness or Godconsciousness, can also be reached through the path of Raja Yoga or concentration upon the supreme Spirit with higher breathing exercises. The higher breathing exercises, as practised by the Yogis in India, will lift the soul above the material plane and bring the highest revelations of ecstasy in the end. They are entirely different from any other breathing exercise, which produces merely physical results or cures diseases. Raja Yoga gives the scientific method, by which one can attain to ecstasy, and, therefore, it is safe for everybody. In Bhakti Yoga. there is a danger of becoming sentimental, erratic, and insane, because it is very difficult to control the emotions, when the whole heart and soul are flooded with exuberance of the stream of love. These emotions become so unruly and unmanageable that they unbalance the mind of the devotee. There have been many instances of persons, who failed to attain to ecstasy and became insane, because they could not control their passions and emotions. But there is no such danger in the path of Raja Yoga or concentration with breathing exercise.

Furthermore, the students of Raja Yoga can advance step by step towards ecstasy under the guidance of an experienced spiritual teacher, and they can thus avoid many of the side-tracks in the field of ecstasy which mislead the mind to psychic phenomena, visions, and hallucinations of the highest spiritual truth. Here we shall have to distinguish the experience of ecstasy from hallucinations and ordinary visions or any other psychic phenomena. How are we going to do that? I have seen a number of spiritualists and other occultists who have gone into a state similar to ecstasy, but have not found the spiritual truth. Because they could not distinguish the highest spiritual Truth from mental visions and psychic phenomena. First of all, we must learn the expressions of spiritual Truths, and in what way they come, and Vedanta will help us in understanding these different stages. Of course, an experienced spiritual teacher is necessary, as in studying either music or art we need an experienced teacher, who understands the defects and different side-tracks and different conditions which may come along the way. Similarly, we need an experienced teacher also in the practice of Raja Yoga. The science of Raja Yoga claims that this highest state of ecstasy, in which the divine Being is realized and the consciousness of the Infinite comes, can only be attained

by a well-qualified man or woman, who has faithfully practised the teachings and has been favoured by direct personal instruction of such an experienced *guru* or spiritual master. In Raja Yoga there is no limitation of any kind. It is not confined to any age or clime nor is it limited by creed, doctrine or dogma of any special religion. But in Bhakti Yoga, there are such limitations.

In Bhakti Yoga, one must have absolute faith in a personal God with a particular name and form, and must worship that personal God through certain forms of worship until the true love and true devotion come. While in Raja Yoga, no such faith in a personal God is absolutely necessary. Even one who has no faith in the supreme Being can practise Raja Yoga and get the results. There is another peculiarity in Raja Yoga which is that it does not ask you to believe in anything until you have realized it; while in Bhakti Yoga, the path of love and devotion (as in Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, or any other dualistic religion), you will have to believe before you realize and must have faith in such a Being. But that may be very difficult for many persons. In Raja Yoga, on the contrary, if you have faith in yourself that you are a soul, a self-conscious spirit, that is enough. You know your own self first, and then, by proper practice, if you can separate your self from the physical organism, you will enter into the state of ecstasy. Raja Yoga can be practised by any follower of any religion, whether a Christian, Mohammedan, Buddhist, or Hindu; whosoever follows this path with earnestness and sincerity will surely attain wonderful results in due time. The practice of concentration will develop into meditation and eventually lead the soul through different stages of ecstasy to Godconsciousness. In that state of Godconsciousness, all doubts will cease; all questions regarding the nature of the soul and the spiritual world will be answered; and the soul will reach that freedom or liberation from the physical form, which is considered to be the highest, and will become conscious of its past and future. Omniscience will begin to dawn upon the horizon of the soul and illumine the whole inner nature. Then the individual soul, coming in direct contact with the Infinite, and realizing the Infinite face to face, as it were, will remain one with the Supreme forever and ever.

CHAPTER VII

SALVATION THROUGH LOVE

The salvation of souls is the highest ideal of all religions. Zoroastrianism, modern Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism, and all other monotheistic or dualistic faiths, believing in one supreme personal God, who dwells in a heaven outside the universe, who creates and governs the world, rewards the virtuous and punishes the wicked, unanimously declare that the enjoyment of celestial pleasures in a paradise or heaven is the highest goal, which a human soul can possibly reach. They say that nothing can be greater and no other state can be higher than that, where the soul, approaching the throne of the Almighty, praises His glory, hears everlasting music, and enjoys the pleasures of life, without pain, sorrow, or cessation. It is a state which is acquired as a reward through the grace of the Almighty by those only, who obey His commands and live a righteous life. But those who disobey His commands and are not virtuous, are not allowed to enter into heaven, but are punished forever and ever. To be rescued from this everlasting punishment and torture, and to be permitted to enter into heaven is the popular meaning of salvation amongst the Zoroastrians, the Jews, the Christians, the Mohammedans, and those who believe in an eternal heaven and an eternal place for punishment.

The Zend Avesta, the scriptures of the Zoroastrians, describes salvation as the heavenly felicity. It comes from Ahura Mazda to the souls of the righteous as a reward for their virtuous deeds and for their obedience to His conmmands. Ahura Mazda says: 'Happy is he, happy the man, whoever he be, to whom Ahura Mazda gives the full accomplishment of his wishes!' According to the Zend Avesta, the souls of the faithful, after death, dwell the first night in the 'Good-Thought Paradise', second night in the 'Good-Word Paradise' and the third night in the 'Good-Deed Paradise'; then resurrecting in the dawn after the third night, they come to the throne of Ahura Mazda and rejoice there with the

most beautiful maidens forever and ever. The wicked souls, on the contrary, pass through the 'Evil-Thought Hell', 'Evil-World Hell', 'Evil-Deed Hell', and lastly stay in endless darkness. There they eat the food of poison and suffer until the last day of judgment, when the repentant souls only are rescued by the grace of Ahura Mazda. The influence of this Persian conception of salvation and of heaven and hell has been felt largely in modern Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism.

The ancient Jews did not believe in heaven or hell. They did not bother their heads about the salvation of souls. Neither did they believe in reward and punishment, nor did they attach any ethical sense to the life after death. The critical readers of the Old Testament are famliar with this fact. It was after the Babylonian Captivity, which lasted between 586-536 B. C., that the Jewish Rabbis and Doctors began to believe in reward and punishment, and accepted the Persian conception of heaven and hell. There are only two cases mentioned in the Old Testament, which speaks of anybody ever going to heaven.[1] They were Enoch and Elijah. But these two instances do not give any evidence that the ancient Jews had any idea of salvation before the Babylonian Captivity. Like the Jews, the Christians owe their ideas of heaven and of salvation to the Zoroastrians. The Christian conception of salvation, however, is to escape from the hell-fire and eternal punishment, and to attain celestial felicity in the presence of the Heavenly Father. That felicity, as we all know, consists in constantly playing on the harp, and listening to everlasting music. There is a hymn which was sung at one time in all the orthodox churches, one verse of which graphically describes the occupation in heaven:

'Where congregations ne'er break up
And Sabbaths never end.'

I suppose very few of us would really consider it to be a very desirable state.

A few years ago a Christian missionary went to the Red Indians to preach, and described the Promised Land by saying that there they would neither eat, drink, hunt, nor marry a

[1] *Second Book of Kings*, II, 8.

wife. After hearing this, one of the Red Indians contemptuously replied: 'Instead of wishing to go there, I should say, my residence in such a place would be the greatest possible calamity that I could imagine.'

The followers of Mohammedanism understand by salvation, going to heaven and escaping the punishment of hell. Like the Jews and the Christians, the Mohammedans also owe their idea of heaven and hell to the Persian source. But the Mohammedan heaven is more concrete than the Christian. 'In it there are gardens, beneath which rivers of water without corruption flow for ever and rivers of milk, the taste whereof changes not, and rivers of wine, delicious to those who drink, and rivers of honey, clarified; and there they shall have shades of trees, bearing all kinds of fruits, will get enduring food of all sorts; and there the pious will find their parents and pure wives and their seed.' In the desert of Arabia water and shade are very desirable, so this description of heaven with gardens and water appeals to the imagination of the Mohammedans. But I come from a country where the average rainfall annually is over four hundred inches, and we have nearly six months of rainy season in lower Bengal, where many villages are washed away every year by the tremendous flood of large rivers. I would not like to go to a heaven full of water. I would rather prefer a drier place. I suppose very few of the English people would care to go to a damp and wet heaven.

The Greeks and the Romans also believed in a heaven and a hell. Their paradise was Elysian Fields, and their hell was Tartarus. This paradise seems to be an imaginary place as no one has ever succeeded in locating it anywhere definitely. Some say, it was a part of the lower world, while others believe it was in the moon. However, in this paradise, shone more glorious sun and stars than illumined this world. The day was always serene, air was always pure, and a soft celestial light clothed all things in transfigured beauty. Majestic groves, verdant meadows, and blooming gardens varied the landscape. The river Eridanus flowed through winding banks, fringed with laurel. On its borders lived heroes who had died for their country, priests who had led a pure life, artists who had embodied genuine beauty in their work, and poets

who had never degraded their muse with subjects unworthy of Apollo. There each one renewed the pleasures in which he formerly delighted. Orpheus in long white robes, made enrapturing music on his lyre, while others danced and sang. The husband rejoined his beloved wife ; old friendships were renewed, the poet repeated his verses and the charioteer managed his horses.' This heaven resembles in a great many points the Swedenborgian conception of heaven. All the earthly occupations will be resumed and continued in heaven. If this be true, I wish to know how many of the cooks, seamstresses, school teachers, lawyers, house-keepers, bell-boys would like to go to such a heaven and continue their profession forever and ever ?

The Teutonic nations also believed in Elysium, where the virtuous and the just were rewarded, and in a hell where the wicked and cowardly were punished.

The Norwegian heaven was the place of Odin, the supreme God. This heaven gives a photographic picture of the manners, wants, and tempers of the ancient Scandinavians. It was a place, where they could eat and drink and fight for ever. The duty of women in this heaven was to fill the drinking cups of men. 'All men who have fallen in fight since the beginning of the world are gone to Valhalla, the hall of the chosen.' 'Every day, as soon as they have dressed themselves, they ride out in the court or field before Odin and there fight until they cut each other into pieces,' but by the mysterious power of Odin their wounds are healed, and they are up again. Then comes a wild boar, whom they chase, hunt, kill, and roast, and thus enjoy a good feast and drink. The same performance will be continued every day forever and ever. I doubt whether the peace-loving and vegetarian people would care for this kind of salvation. One of the Americans who was passionately fond of reading newspapers, asked the preacher, 'Is there any newspaper in heaven ?' The preacher answered in the negative. 'Then,' he replied, 'I don't want to go to a heaven where there ain't no newspaper.'

In India I knew a man who was in the habit of eating a lump of opium every day. His idea of heaven was a place, where the walls of the house should be thickly plastered with opium, and he would get plenty of opium and delicious sweet

things to eat. I suppose few of us would like to go to such a heaven.

A young man dreams of a heaven, where he will get a beautiful wife. A young woman takes delight in the dream of a heaven, where she will have a good and faithful husband, plenty of jewels, all the luxuries of life, without sorrow, without any manual labour, like washing dishes, scrubbing floors, and similar other disagreeable works.

Thus we can understand that these various ideas of heaven are according to the likes and dislikes of individuals, tribes, and nations. They are but the projections of such ideas as are dearest to them. We create our heaven acording to our ideas and wants. If we are attached to a certain object or to any particular kind of pleasure, we wish to enjoy it all the time without any cessation; consequently, our heaven will be that place, where we shall find that thing or that pleasure for ever. Such is the natural tendency of human minds. Our idea of heaven coincides with our idea of unalloyed happiness and pleasure, that is, minus unhappiness, misery, and sorrow. Such heavens do not exist outside, but in the minds of those who believe in them. They are like the dreamlands which exist merely on the psychic plane of the dreamers. If we are brought up in a society, where a certain idea of heaven prevails, unconsciously, we imbibe that idea and begin to believe it as true.

Again, the idea of heaven is inseparably related to its opposite idea. If there be no hell, or a place for punishment, there will be no necessity for a heaven. When an orthodox Christian or a Mohammedan thinks that he shall go to heaven, because of his faith or creed, he feels happy and rejoices at the thought that those, who do not follow his creed, will go to the other place. So, his happiness exists as such, as long it is compared with the sufferings of others at the place of punishment. If all the heathens and sinners come to the Christian heaven instead of going to the other place, then there will be no attraction left for a Christian. Moreover, you will notice that the Christian heaven is separated from hell by a transparent wall, through which the inhabitants of heaven can see the misery and suffering of the wicked; otherwise they would not enjoy it at all. Our happiness depends

upon comparison with its opposite. If we have no conception of pain, we cannot enjoy pleasure. For this reason, a Christian minister once asked in the course of his sermon: 'Do you suppose that the sight of your friends and relatives in hell will interfere with your eternal felicity?' He answered that it would not; on the contrary, the thought of God's justice would make them take delight in it. Jonathan Edwards[1] went a little further and said that happiness is always increased by the sight of an opposite condition. If such be the case, I would rather suffer eternal punishment than be in a heaven, where people are engaged in such hellish delights.

Furthermore, the very idea of eternal heaven necessitates the idea of an eternal place of punishment. Many people, whose eyes have been opened by modern science, cannot bear the doctrine of eternal punishment; but they believe in an eternal heaven, although they dare not say anything regarding the condition of those who cannot enter into paradise. Whether they speak of it or not, they indirectly admit that the sinners shall have to go somewhere and suffer in some manner forever and ever; otherwise, the existence of an eternal heaven would be an impossibility. Therefore, if by salvation is meant going to the eternal heaven, it is implied that those, who are not saved, must suffer eternally as no other alternative is left for them.

Such a salvation, being a reward of God to those who obey His commands, the Zoroastrians, the Jews, and the Mohammedans, believe that this gift can be obtained by doing good works and by strictly observing the laws that are prescribed in their scriptures. The orthodox Christians, however, believe that such a salvation can be acquired by faith alone, and not merely by obeying the scriptural laws and commands. It was Paul who first preached this dogma of 'salvation by faith.' It teaches that, if a sinner, after committing all kinds of sins and crimes throughout his life, believes that Jesus the Christ died for him and took away all his sins, then he will be pardoned and saved from punishment and will go straight to heaven after death and enjoy there celestial pleasures for ever.

[1] An American divine (1703—1758). He was an acute metaphysician, but a rigid Calvinist. He wrote *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, Sermons,* etc.

This is the common belief. No doubt the path of salvation has been smoothed and made easy by this method, but the most baneful effects of such a doctrine are to be found nowhere so much as among the Christian converts in India. They imitate all Christian vices with a hope of getting salvation simply through the power of the blind faith that Christ died for them and took away all sins.

According to Vedanta, however, salvation does not consist in simply going to heaven and enjoying the celestial pleasures. Although Vedanta does not deny the existence of a heaven, but on the contrary, admitting that there are many heavens or realness of enjoyment, it says that salvation means something different from the enjoyment of heavenly felicity after death. The common name in Sanskrit for all these heavens is *loka,* which means a 'realm.' For instance, there is *pitriloka,* or the realm of the Fathers, manes, or departed ancestors; *devaloka,* or the realm of the *devas* or bright spirits; *brahmaloka,* the realm of Brahma, the creator, the First-Born Lord, or the Father of the universe. Each of these realms is described as a heaven for celestial enjoyment and each is to be acquired by good deeds or good *karma.* If, for example, any person desires some particular kind of enjoyment after death, he shall have to perform some special kind of good work, and then after death, as a result of his work, he will go to that realm, where he will find the object of his desire. But, at the same time, Vedanta teaches that going to any such heaven cannot be called the attainment of true salvation. These realms or heavens are not eternal, because they are within the domain of the phenomenal universe. No one can stay in any such heaven throughout eternity without having any further growth or making any further progress; but, on the contrary, Vedanta says that the inhabitants of the heavens shall stay there until the fruits of their good works are reaped completely. At the end of the period of enjoyment of the fruits of their works, they shall be forced to come back to this earth, and shall be born again to perform new *karma,* and make further progress.

The stay in the heavens cannot be eternal, because it is the result of good action, which is finite and, consequently, non-eternal. Many people use the word 'eternal' without paying proper attention to its true meaning. The term 'eternal'

literally means beginningless and endless. Anything that has a beginning or an end cannot be called eternal. The result of an action again, by the law of action and reaction, being of a similar nature to the work itself, the effect can be eternal, only when its cause is eternal, and not otherwise. Such being the condition of the law of cause and effect, how can any work, however good it might be, when it has a beginning in time and space, produce an eternal result, that is, a result which is unlimited either in time or space? It is simply an illogical and absurd statement that heaven, which is attainable as the result of finite good works, or of faith, is eternal. If anyone does good work or worships God at every second of his lifetime, still the sum total of all his works must be finite and limited by time. How can it then produce an eternal result? That cannot be. For the same reason, there cannot be eternal punishment. If a wicked man commits the most sinful act at every moment of his earthly career, even then the span of his life being an infinitesimal particle, when compared to eternity, the sum total of all his wicked or sinful acts can never produce any such thing as eternal punishment. Therefore, the doctrine of eternal punishment is also illogical and absurd. The religion of Vedanta does not accept any such dogma, which makes heaven or hell eternal. In reality, all heavens, when compared to the beginningless and endless eternity, are as transitory as anything of this world. Therefore, Vedanta philosophy declares that eternal salvation is not acquired by going to heaven of any kind, whether it be a Christian, Mohammedan, or Hindu heaven. They are all phenomenal. For this reason, it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*: 'O Arjuna! none of these heavens, from the highest heaven of the Creator downward, is permanent. The inhabitants thereof are sure to return from them sooner or later.'[1] Consequently, it is not the real salvation according to Vedanta.

The true and the highest meaning of salvation is neither going to a heaven, nor enjoying celestial pleasures, and living in the presence of a personal God, but it lies in going beyond all phenomena, in rising above all relativity and in attaining

[1] "आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन।"
—*Bhagavad Gita*, VIII, 16.

perfect freedom from all bondage of time, space, and the law of causation. This perfect freedom is possible, when one transcends all laws that govern the physical, mental, moral, and spiritual planes. In that state the individual soul realizes its divine nature and enjoys the blissfulness of absolute emancipation from all limitation and imperfection. This salvation is called in Sanskrit *moksha,* that is, perfect freedom of the soul. Perhaps Jesus the Christ meant this perfect freedom when he said: 'And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

This absolute freedom or true salvation, which is eternal, cannot be obtained as the result of good works. Neither can it be attained by mere belief in this man or that being, in this book or that creed, nor by blind faith in any scriptural statement. It comes to the soul, which is purified from ignorance and selfishness by unselfish works, which should be done not for gaining rewards or results of any kind, but through pure and disinterested love. It comes to the soul of the lover of absolute Truth; to that soul which is not bound by any creed or sect or dogma, but which, after breaking down all fetters, soars high in the spiritual atmosphere for the realization of the absolute Truth.

True salvation or perfect freedom does not begin after death, like that of the dualistic religions, but it commences here in this life. He who is not free here cannot enjoy freedom in the life hereafter. He who has not struggled for freedom in this life, shall not attain it after death. He who is a slave of passions and sensual desires will remain so hereafter. According to Vedanta, absolute freedom or emancipation of the soul from the bondage of ignorance, selfishness, and all other limitation and imperfection can be acquired, when the ultimate truth or divinity is realized. In fact, true salvation and the realization of the absolute Truth come simultaneously. Again, before one realizes the eternal Truth, there must be in the soul an extreme desire, longing, and love for that truth. If there be, in any soul, extreme longing for freedom and intense love for the eternal Truth, it is impossible for that soul to remain contented or happy until it has realized the Truth and become free. The power of love is tremendous. There is no force in the universe greater or stronger than the power

of love. If there be true and genuine love for anything, nothing in the world can resist or counteract the attraction of the soul towards that object of love. True love is that power which brings the soul and the object of love together, unites them, and makes them into one, after removing all the obstacles with which the lover or the object of love might have been beset. It cuts off all ties, breaks the chain by which the lover might have been bound and sets him free. If we have real love for the eternal truth our minds should naturally be withdrawn from all transitory things which are non-eternal; or, in other words, we should be unattached to that which is not eternal and we should only care for that which is eternal.

Our souls should not be attached by any other object than that which is unlimited by time and space. Our life is determind by the things we love. If you tell me the things you love most, if you show me the object of your intense love, you have shown me your life; because we live in what we love. If we love the highest, then we live on the highest plane. If we love material things, we are on the material plane. If we have self-love, we are selfish. If we love freedom, we cannot live without being absolutely free, and without being saved from all bondage. Therefore, when we begin to love the eternal Truth, which is the centre of the universe, we have come nearer and closer to that centre and must gradually attain it sooner or later and ultimately become one with it. That eternal truth again is one and cannot be many. It is called God, or the Father of the universe, as well as by many other names. It is said in the Vedanta: *'raso vai sah'*, that is, 'the nature of Divinity is Love which is absolute, unchangeable, infinite, and eternal. Blessed is he who has tasted that Love Divine'. Wherever there is the expression of true love, there is the manifestation of Divinity; consequently, there is freedom or salvation from all bondage; there is absolute knowledge, that is, the salvation from ignorance; there is truth, that is, the salvation from that which is unreal, untrue, or non-eternal; there is happiness, that is, the salvation from misery, sorrow, and suffering. The light of divine love dispels the darkness of ignorance and reveals the eternal Truth which is dwelling in each soul.

The easiest way of attaining this divine love is to understand the conditions under which human love becomes divine.

Although everyone of us is conscious of the feeling of love, still very few indeed do realize the true nature of divine love. The same love which is manifested in human hearts, when governed by selfishness is earthly, narrow, limited; and it leads to bondage, sorrow and suffering; but, when it is not guided by selfish motives, it is pure, divine, and it leads to freedom of soul and eternal happiness. All evil and wickedness proceed from love governed by selfish feelings; and all good and virtues are the results of acts which are prompted by unselfish love. Whatever is bad and sinful in society is nothing but the ill-directed working out of the feeling of love. But, when it is properly directed toward the eternal Truth, it always produces good and happiness, and brings to the soul salvation from all selfishness and wickedness.

In each individual soul there is flowing a current of love, which like a confined river constantly seeks an outlet through which it can run into the ocean of divine love which is called God. It may not find an outlet for a long time; it may remain confined for ages within the limits of the narrow self or ego; but it never loses that tendency to run toward the infinite ocean of eternal love. It must find its way out of that limit sooner or later. Every drop of that stream of love, which flows in the human heart, contains the germ of divine love. But it varies in its character according to the direction toward which it flows, and to the motive by which it is governed. When it flows toward one's own self, it is animal; when toward another for mutual benefit, it is human; but, when it flows toward an object only for the good of that object, then it is divine. This is only possible, when the love for eternal Truth springs up in the bosom of the individual soul. As the eternal Truth is all-pervading, and manifests itself as the souls of all living creatures, and especially through human beings, the love for Truth generates true and unselfish love for all human beings, nay, for all living creatures. It is then alone that whatever is done by body and mind is performed through pure and disinterested love for the good of all, and not for fulfilling selfish motives or desires, or for gaining anything in return.

Divine love does not seek any return for work. Wherever there is a feeling of getting any return of love, it is no longer unselfish or divine; it does not bring freedom or salvation from

selfishness; but, on the other hand, it binds the soul with the tie of that desire for getting the return, and, consequently, makes it unhappy and miserable. All desires proceed from self. How can a man taste the nectar of divine love and obtain salvation from selfishness, so long as he is a slave of desires? O man! if thou desirest to enjoy eternal freedom, first wipe out from the tablet of the heart the least stain of selfishness and attachment to selfish desires or motives. Divine love saves the soul from the bondage of fear. Love and fear cannot dwell in the same place at the same time. Fear proceeds from attachment to the self; while true love makes one unattached to the self, and devoted to the universal Truth. Love and fear are like the two opposite poles; where the one predominates the other cannot approach. Even in ordinary life, when a man truly falls in love with another, he loses all fear of criticism or opinion of others, and becomes absolutely fearless. He does not fear death even, when he knows that, after death, he will be with his beloved. As such, how is it possible for an unselfish lover of the eternal Truth to fear anything of the world? Divine Love conquers all fear.

Furthermore, divine love makes one free from the bondage of duties. As a true lover neglects his duties toward parents, relatives, friends, society, when he is in the company of his beloved, so, a lover of God Himself, he ever remains free from them. Again, as a true lover leaves everybody for the sake of being with his beloved, so, the lover of God renounces everything for the sake of being always with Him. Divine love brings non-attachment to worldly pleasures and enjoyments.

In fact, divine love and absolute renunciation of all other desires for pleasures and enjoyments go together hand in hand. Thus the true lover of God desires nothing, he cares for nothing but the eternal Truth. His mind is absolutely one-pointed and he is truly happy.

Divine love brings the highest ecstatic condition, in which the individual soul communes with the universal Spirit. It transforms the human nature into the absolute Divinity, which is ever free and ever blissful. In that ecstatic state of supreme love, the individual soul reaches true salvation or absolute freedom from attachment to the lower self, which is the highest

aim of our life. Then he does not care to go to heaven or to enjoy celestial pleasures after death. He enjoys everlasting bliss even in this life. Having once acquired this absolute freedom he never for a second loses it, but always remains as the master of nature and lord of the world. 'With his soul fixed in union with Brahman, the eternal Reality or Truth, he conquers birth and attains true salvation in this life, through that love which is unselfish and divine.'[1]

[1] इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः।
निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद्ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः॥
—*Bhagavad Gita, V, 19.*

DIVINE HERITAGE OF MAN

DEDICATED

TO THE

BELOVED AND REVERED MEMORY

OF THE

BLESSED SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

MY SPIRITUAL BROTHER AND

FELLOW DISCIPLE OF

BHAGAVAN SRI RAMAKRISHNA

CONTENTS

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Human reasons exhausted both for and against the existence of God—Monotheistic conception of God—Extra-cosmic God—Range of sense-perception—Infinite is one and not many —Materialistic view of the Infinite—God or Brahman as depicted in the Upanishads—God though unknown in ordinary sense but spiritually more known and knowable—The knower of all—Infinite substance beyond all objects of senses—What is meant by 'to know the infinite'—God seen only in the superconscious plane—The way to reach spiritual realization.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

God as described in various scriptures—One or many 'Gods'—the same God worshipped by all religions—Anthropomorphic conception of God—God with form must die—God is the only reality—What is meant by spirit—Infinite Being pervades all things—Phenomena and the absolute Being—Brahman and *maya*—Isvara and cosmic ego—What is creation —Divine energy and matter—God the repository of all good qualities—He is just yet merciful—The effect of realization of God—Life is transformed and Divinity reveals through all deeds and works.

HAS GOD ANY FORM

God as described in the Old Testament—The Jewish belief in God—Yahveh, the God of the ancient Israelites—Various tribal gods amongst the different tribes of the Jews—The humanized God of the ancient Greeks—Jupiter or Zeus Pitar of the Greeks—What are the Vedic Devas—One supreme God above all gods of the primitive people—Refutation against many gods—The powers of nature personified and called humanized idea of God—The attempts for forming the impersonal conception of God—God with form and beyond form—Dualistic belief—Vedic conception of God—Isvara or the supreme manifestation of the Infinite—The story of prince Prahlada, the great saint.

Fatherhood and Motherhood of God

Fatherhood of God first of all known by the Aryans—Christ preached it ages after—Man's relation to God as described by Judaism—The first growth of conception of God in human mind—The origin of the conception of the word 'Jupiter'—The supreme God as described in the Rig Veda—the Hymn to *Hiranyagarbha* or the cosmic Being—Aditi the mother of gods —God both as Father and Mother known to and worshipped by the ancient Indians—God both the efficient and material causes of the universe—Fatherhood and Motherhood of God as conceived by the Vedas—The phenomena are the evolutes of the eternal Energy or *Prakriti* or the eternal cosmic Energy—The Hindus worship it as the mother of the universe—*Vidya* and *Avidya-maya* and their functions—Indian (Hindu) women revered as the living images of the divine Mother—Brahman, Isvara and divine Mother—Efficacy of worshipping God as Mother—Sri Ramakrishna, the blessed child of the divine Mother—Hymn to both aspects of God as Father and Mother.

The Relation of Soul to God

Man and his relation to God is an eternal question—God's existence denied by the atheists—Dualists, Qualified Dualists and Monistic (Advaitists) believers—Jehovah of the Old Testament—The first man and the origin of sin as described by the Bible—Jesus the Christ 'an exception' to the law of nature—New Testament does not give a clear conception of soul—All souls will be liberated—Divinity pervades all things and beings —God rules from within—Not creation but evolution—Human and other souls are one with God—Human souls are parts of the divine Being—The monistic belief—The soul always is one and not many—Soul and Atman, their difference—The true nature of the Atman—Phenomena and the unchangeable Reality —Atman and Brahman as interpreted by the various schools of Vedanta—The successive stages of the worshippers in relation to the Infinite.

What is an Incarnation of God

Christian belief in incarnation of God—Jesus in his lifetime not recognized as the incarnation of God—Doctrine of

Christian Trinity—Controversy on Trinity in the Church of Alexandria—Decision in the Council of Nicea in 327 A.D.—The divine incarnationship of Jesus established on the majority of votes—Disbelief of the then thinking people in the incarnationship of Jesus—Difference of the Hindus with the Christians on some points with regard to God's incarnation—When and why God incarnates—Sri Krishna's declaration of incarnationship in the Gita—God incarnates whenever there is a necessity—the characteristics of a divine incarnation—The birth of an ordinary man and that of an incarnation of God are not of the same cause—God incarnates both in the male and female form—Sri Ramakrishna, the latest incarnation of God—An incarnation of God delivers men from all bondages—He is the supreme giver of salvation.

Son of God

Christ upheld by the Christians as the Son of God—Investigation of the sonship of God by the non-Christian scholars—The two conceptions of sonship of God in the Gospels—Disbelief of the Jews and Mohammedans in the sonship of God—The doctrine of sonship borrowed by the Christians from the ancient Greeks—Philo the Alexandrian Jew and his theory of Logos—The Word in the Fourth Gospel borrowed from the non-Christian sources—Messianic hope of the ancient Jews—Messianic conception deprived from the Zoroastrian idea of *Sosiosh*—'Logos' as interpreted by Heraclitus, Anaxogras and other scholars of ancient Greece—Neo-Platonic school and theory of Logos—Various meanings of the word Logos given by the ancient Greek scholars—Logos or the type of ideal man in the Divine mind—Divine sonship as interpreted by Vedanta—Every man is the son of God—The parable of the self-forgotten prince—Jesus alone was not son of God—Sons of God were many besides Christ, Krishna, Buddha and others.

Divine Principle of Man

Divine qualities within every man—Man is a transition point between animal and God—The life of the savage people and that of the civilized men—Vices and misdeeds grow out of the animal tendency in man—Love for all is the basis of ethical

principles—Unselfishness is the first expression of divine principle in a man—Consciously or unconsciously every man moving towards Divinity—Awakening of the human soul leads to the Divine realization—Divinity lies within every man—Christian doctrine of 'original sin' refuted—Exception to the law of nature not a miracle but effect of some hidden cause—Jesus alone was not the only begotten son of God—All men and women are essentially divine—Image of God as meant by Vedanta—Worldly desires are barriers against the manifestation of divine principles already in man—Man struggles through various births and at last manifests his divine nature—The animal and divine nature within every man—The illustration of two birds as described in the Upanishad—Human soul and its inseparable relation with the divine Being—Divine principle is all-pervading and eternal—It is the very essence of all things and beings.

CHAPTER I

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Human minds seem to have almost exhausted their reasoning powers in producing all kinds of arguments that can be given both for and against the existence of God. For hundreds of years philosophers, scientists, and theologians among all nations have been bringing forward proofs either to show that there is such a Being as God, or to deny His existence entirely. Of course, most of the arguments and proofs in favour of the existence of God are convincing to those who already have some sort of belief in the Creator or some conception of the supreme Being. If we have been brought up in an atmosphere where there prevails a belief in God as the Creator and Ruler of the universe or as an extra-mundane Being who, dwelling outside of nature, commands everything and directs the movements of the world, then unconsciously we breathe in and imbibe that belief from our childhood, and as we grow older, we accept all the arguments and evidences that we can find in support of this preconceived idea.

If we have already a conception of God as the First Cause, then all the inductions and inferences which maintain that idea, will naturally appeal to us and we shall take them for granted. But those whose minds are not biased or influenced by any such idea, belief, or conception, those who are able to examine these proofs critically in the light of modern science applying logic and reason, and those who freely investigate nature, searching for an extra-cosmic Creator and Ruler of the universe, may fail to find any convincing proof, and may therefore deny the existence of God as such, or as the First Cause of all.

We all know how the theory of evolution has revolutionized the old idea of the special creation of the world out of nothing at some definite period of time. Those who found consolation in the design theory and held it to be the most unassailable ground in favour of the existence of an omnipotent Designer, are now hopelessly discouraged by the introduction of the Darwinian theories of natural selection and sexual selection. By

these theories we can explain almost all the so called designs of the Creator. Moreover, the design argument cannot make clear why, under the government of a just, omnipotent, and omniscient Ruler, should happen such disorders as the volcanic eruptions on the Island of Martinique, or as the plagues, famines and other disasters, which devastate different countries, destroying hundreds of thousands of innocent living creatures. The design theory cannot trace the causes of such disasters; for, if there were a Designer, His design should be perfect and there should be harmony instead of discord.

The monotheistic religions have tried to explain the cause of all the disorders that occur in the universe by a theory of a Creator of evil, as distinct and separate from the Designer of good. This method of explanation, however, does not help us much in proving the existence of a perfect, all-powerful, and infinite God, for we all then have to admit two beings, one, the creator of good, and the other, the creator of evil, which will make each limited by the other, and will take away all idea of the omnipotence and infinity of the supreme Being.

Those, who believe that God is the First Cause of the universe, must determine the nature of that First Cause—whether He is the efficient or the material cause. We know that these two causes are essential for the production of a thing, as, in the case of a pot, the potter is the efficient and the earth is the material cause. Now, if we say that God is the efficient or instrumental cause of the universe like the maker of a pot, then it would have been impossible for Him to create without the help of the material cause, which must have co-existed with the Creator. Here we are confronted with the same difficulty—that God, who stands outside the material cause, is limited by matter; therefore, He cannot be unlimited in the proper sense of the term. If, on the contrary, the material cause be meant by First Cause, then He must have gone through all the changes of evolution, which would make Him like a changeable, phenomenal object of the universe, a conclusion which we cannot accept.

The moral argument that the moral laws presuppose a law-giver, cannot prove the existence of God, since we know that natural laws do not presuppose a law-giver. In the first place, we should understand what 'law' means. The forces of nature

are operating in the universe in certain modes, and when the regularity and uniformity of these modes are observed and interpreted by the human mind, they are called 'laws'; consequently, these laws are to be found neither in nature nor outside of it, but in the human mind. Secondly, as in external nature, the natural forces, acting under regular modes, do not presuppose a law-giver, so it can be shown that the moral laws are but modes in which natural forces operate on the moral plane; that they do not need a moral law-giver, but their process is the same as the evolutionary process of the physical world. Furthermore, all such conceptions of God as the natural law-giver or the moral law-giver are rejected by advanced thinkers as the anthropomorphic ideas of uncultured minds.

All these proofs and many other arguments like these, which were considered to be sufficient to establish the existence of an extra-cosmic Creator, Ruler, or Law-giver of the universe, are now thrown aside as imperfect and fallacious. In these days of science and reason, when we try to prove the existence of God, we do not search for a creator or fashioner of the world, or for a designer or First Cause of the phenomenal universe; nor do we look for a moral law-giver. Our conception of God has outgrown those stages of evolution and has become as large as the infinity of the universe. We no longer think that this earth is the stationary centre around which the sun, moon, and other luminaries of the heavens revolve, moved by the supernatural power of angles, who, according to the old-fashioned belief, dwelt above the blue dome of the sky overhead and moved these planets according to their whims and fancies. We are just beginning to understand the vastness of the universe. Modern astronomy has opened our eyes to the fact that this earth which we inhabit, is to be considered as an infinitesimal point, when compared with the immensity of space and with the innumerable cosmic bodies that exist above the horizon. We have learned that there are heavenly bodies beyond our solar system, the nearest one of which is so distant from us that its light, travelling at the rate of one hundred and eighty-six thousands miles per second, requires three and a half years to reach our earth. There are other stars so remote that thousands of years are needed for their light, travelling at the same rate to arrive at our planet. We are assured that more than one thousand mil-

lion stars have been discovered by the telescope, and that there may be millions and millions of suns which are yet beyond the reach of our best instruments.

Thus, as far as we can get by stretching our imagination, we do not find any limit or boundary to the universe; we still have the feeling that there is something beyond. This sense of something existing beyond what we know and perceive is always with us; we cannot get rid of it. Even when we try to perceive a finite object, that sense of beyond is most intimately connected with our perception and conception of it. There is a feeling of the infinite very closely associated with all our ideas and concepts. Take, for instance, the geometrical figure, a square; when we try to perceive that square, we can only perceive it by perceiving the space beyond it. We see it as a figure enclosed by four straight lines, but, at the same time, there is a feeling of the space beyond, otherwise we could not perceive the square.

Again, when we look at the space which is circumscribed by the horizon, we do not lose the sense that there is something beyond that limit, that infinite space extends beyond the visible horizon. The same perception of limitlessness or of the infinite is closely associated with the idea of time. We cannot conceive either its beginning or its end. There always remains the sense of the eternal beyond both before and after our cenception of time. In this way we get the perception of eternity. The human mind is so peculiarly constituted that it is incapable of finding the absolute defined limit of anything of the world. Trees, mountains, rivers, earth, sun, moon, and all other objects of the senses are tangible, but do we find any definite limit when we carefully analyse our perceptions of these objects? No, we do not. We may do our best, but we are sure to discover, sooner or later, that there is a sense of beyond constantly attached to them.

Let us take an illustration: suppose that we stand under a big oak tree; we may look at it, touch it, smell it, but can we perceive the absolute limit of that tree? Do our senses take in the whole tree at one time? No, our senses cannot reach its deepest roots or its highest branches, nor do we know what is going on under the bark or in the leaves. It is impossible for any one to take in the whole tree at one time; we may take

it in, by parts, but, at the same time, the perception of each part will, under all circumstances, leave in our minds the sense of beyond. Again, when we think of the innumerable atoms and molecules that make up the body of that tree, its finite form vanishes, leaving an impression that, what we call 'tree', is indeed an expression of the infinite; for, when the form is gone, that which is left of the tree, is inseparable from the infinite ocean of some substance imperceptible to the senses. Moreover, when we try to know the power or force that gives form to that tree and makes it living, which cannot be separated from it, then in one sense we must say that the tree has in it something intangible, mysterious, and unknowable; we cannot help it.

In the same manner, it can be shown that every finite perception or conception of an object brings with it a sense of beyond, a perception of the infinite, or something that is unknown and unknowable, of something that is eternal. Take a drop of water which is finite; put it under the microscope and you will see infinitesimal atoms moving about, some clearly visible, some so minute that they are hardly perceptible with the help of the most powerful microscope. Yet, modern chemistry tells us that we can ascertain the relative positions of these atoms so minutely that millions upon millions of them could stand upon the point of a needle. Is not the infinitude of this small drop of water as wounderful as the infinity of space? Indeed the drop of water is finite and infinite at the same time. When we see a flower, or touch it, we cannot help realizing in the same way that it is the finite appearance of that something which we cannot know, which is finite and eternal. It is like a beautiful painting upon the canvas of that eternal invisible substance of the universe which the senses cannot perceive, which the mind cannot grasp or comprehend; it is the expression of that infinite matter which fills all space. No one can deny the existence of this substance, which appears to our senses in an infinite variety of forms and shapes.

Modern science tells us that this all-pervading substance of the universe has neither beginning nor end, because we cannot know its limit either in space or in time. As far back as we can go in our conception of time, we find that the sense of beyond is present; it is therefore eternal, that is, beginningless

and endless. It is neither increased nor diminished by anything; we cannot add one iota to this substance, nor can we subtract anything from it; it is consequently unchangeable in quantity as well as in quality. It is all-powerful, because all the forces, manifested in the perceptible world, proceed from and rest upon that unlimited substance. We may call it by whatever name we like; it is the real essence of all phenomena. It is like the ocean upon which the waves of phenomenal forms are rising and, after playing their parts, are disappearing again and again. All these forms of sun, or moon, or stars, of human beings or animals, are nothing but waves in that infinite ocean. As the waves cannot exist without the ocean, so finite substance, which is behind and beyond all phenomena. That infinite substance is the support of the universe; it is one, because it is infinite; if the infinite were many, it would lose its limitless nature and become finite.

Ever since the dawn of intellect upon the horizon of the human mind, there has been a constant struggle for a definite knowldge of this something which is beyond all finite existence and yet is not finite. The human mind cannot rest contented with the mere play of appearances, but always yearns to know what it is that appears. From ancient times, those who have had some kind of perception of this infinite, as related to the phenomenal universe, have also tried to express their ideas by giving different names to it. Thus, have arisen the various names by which human minds have designated this infinite substance; but each of these names now stands like a landmark in the path of the evolution of the conception of God. Whether we call that infinite substance God, or Creator, or Designer, or First Cause, or the Father, or Jehovah, or Allah, or Brahman, we mean the same infinite, eternal, all-powerful, and unchangeable Substance. Every individual has a vague perception of this infinite around him or her; some are more conscious of it than others. The more that we are dissatisfied and discontented with finite things, the stronger grows in us the desire to know more about this infinite, to understand more about that something which is not finite, which is beyond finite time and beyond limited space. When we find no pleasure, no satisfaction, no happiness in objects limited by time and space, and when we realize

the transitoriness of all that is finite, our inner nature longs for that which is absolutely unlimited, and we wish to know where it is and how it is. We seek it here and there, not knowing exactly what we want; we struggle for knowledge, and search for that infinite Being, and the search grows stronger and stronger, until the realization of the nature of the infinite is obtained.

To a materialist who studies the objective side of the universe, this infinite substance appears as material and insentient. He calls it matter, and tries to deduce this phenomenal world from this infinite unintelligent matter. The matter of the materialist, however, is as infinite as eternal, as all-powerful as the God or the supreme Being of the religionists. A materialist simply studies the objective world and does not recognize or study the subjective universe; therefore he is satisfied with his conclusions; but as the objective side is only one-half of the universe, his conclusions are one sided. Those who, on the contrary, study subjective nature, discover the same infinite behind their limited minds, and beyond every idea, thought, feeling, or sensation. The finite mind is that which takes the forms of thoughts, ideas, feelings, sensations, and which is limited by the sense of 'I'. When, however, we try to think of the definite boundary of the sense of 'I' or of the finite mind, we cannot find it; we fail to trace the beginning or end of that which thinks, or feels, or perceives, or conceives, or imagines. We realize that the physical forms are like the waves in the infinite ocean of mental space filled with finer substance. As we cannot attach the sense of 'I' to our physical form, so we cannot call these mental forms as our own. Thus, after careful study, the students of the subjective world come to the conclusion that the subjective infinite is the Reality of the universe, and that external phenomena are but the representations or projections of the subjective infinite or mind. According to them, time and space do not exist outside the mind; consequently, everything in space and time is like a picture of the subjective idea. They deny the existence of matter and trace the origin of all qualities or powers of the finite mind to that infinite mind. They give the attribute of intelligence to it, and call it the eternal and intelligent cosmic mind. The existence of infinite mind is as undeniable as that of infinite matter. But

this substance, whether we call it mind or matter, subject or object, is the one unknowable Being of the universe. All mental as well as all physical forms are but its appearances. It is called in Sanskrit, Brahman. From this infinite and eternal Brahman we have come into existence; in It we live, and into It we return at the end of phenomenal existence.

In ancient India the question was asked, 'What is God?' The answer we find in Vedanta: 'That from which all animate and inanimate objects have come into existence, in which they live and play like waves in the sea, and into which they return ultimately at the time of dissolution, know that to be Brahman, or the infinite Substance, or God.' Who can live without being sustained by this Infinite One? As a painting cannot stand without the background, so phenomena cannot exist without being supported by the infinite Substance or Brahman. It pervades the universe, interpenetrating atoms and molecules, yet it lies beyond all the mental and physical phenomena of the manifested universe. It is not confined by the limitations of sex or gender; we may call this Being he, she, or it. This infinite Substance or Brahman is incomprehensible and unknowable to finite minds. That to which the modern agnostics refer, when they use the term 'Unknowable', is the same Infinite Being.

Here we must not forget the meaning of the verb 'to know'. In its ordinary sense 'to know' means first to perceive through the senses, and then to form a concept of the object perceived. Consequently, all our knowledge is limited by the power of perception as well as by the mind. To know God or the Infinite Being by the same kind of knowledge as that by which we know a stone or a tree or a dog, would be tantamount to annihilating God. Because, a known God in this sense would cease to be God; He would become a phenomenal object, an idol, and not the Infinite Being, for in trying to know God, we would be bringing that Infinite Being within the limits of our finite mind. In this sense, therefore, God, or the Infinite Being, is always unknown and unknowable. Shall we, then, join the agnostics and be contented with our ignorance and powerlessness to know the Infinite? Shall we cease from all our attempts and struggles to understand the nature of the Infinite, or to know the existence of God, when He is unknowable? No.

Here is a great fact to learn that although the Infinite Being is unknown and unknowable, according to the point of view of modern agnosticism, He is more than known, more than knowable, from the standpoint of the Vedanta. He is the essence of our being as well as the essence of our Self. He is the source of our knowledge. All knowledge proceeds from that infinite Wisdom ; when we know a thing, we know it in and through Him. When, for instance, we know a table, we say that the table is known ; but can we trace the source of this knowledge? Do we know from where it comes? It is not created by us. It is eternal ; it exists in the infinite mind or that something behind the finite mind, and through that knowledge we say that the table is known. When we say that ether is unknown and unknowable, we use this same knowledge as our guide. That by which we are able to cognize a thing and to call it known or unknown, is Divinity itself. Therefore whether we know a thing or do not know it, knowledge in either case is possible only through the one source of all wisdom and consciousness.

It is for this reason that God is more than anything known and knowable, or anything unknown and unknowable. He is the essence of the ego or 'I' ; no one can live without being sustained by that infinite source of existence, knowledge, and consciousness. It is not that God dwells somewhere outside the universe and from there is making my blood circulate or my heart beat, but He is in every cell of my body. He fills the space of my form. I owe my existence to Him. He is the Soul of my soul as well as the Soul of the universe. He is in you, in me, in the chair, in the wall and everywhere, yet we do not see or know Him. It would be a great degradation of God, if He could be known by our ordinary knowledge. He would then be like a changeable, limited, and phenomenal something, such as we perceive with our senses ; whereas He is, in fact, the Knower of the universe or the eternal Subject, who knows everything in each of us. The Knower or the Subject in us is unchangeable, eternal, and one.

When we understand that by knowledge is meant objectification, we realize that all our attempts to express that infinite Subject in language—to call Him Father, Brother, or dearest Friend—are nothing but so many efforts of the human mind to

objectify the infinite, unlimited Subject of the universe. We cannot, however, remain satisfied with this imperfect knowledge of Divinity; we desire to know more about the Infinite Being. Gradually we may come to realize that He is the Creator of the world, the Governor of all, or the First Cause of the universe. But here again we shall not rest content; we shall still wish to know more about Him. Then we shall find that the same Infinite Substance or Being which is beyond every finite object, space and time, and mind and body, is in reality not very far from us; wherefor it is said in the Vedanta: 'He is far from us, yet He is nearer than the nearest; He dwells in everything, yet He is outside the phenomenal universe; He is infinitely smaller than the atom of an atom, yet He is infinitely larger than the largest solar system, than the space which covers the perceptible universe.'

When we see the sun, moon, or stars, we see that part of the Infinite, which is visible to our eyes; when we hear a sound, we perceive that part of the Infinite which is audible to our ears; but God is in reality beyond light, sound, odour, taste or touch. He is the same Infinite Substance which transcends time and space, and mind and sense powers. By knowing so much of the Infinite, however, we are yet unsatisfied, we still desire to know more. Our souls still long for a deeper knowledge of that all-pervading Substance. The more we study phenomenal objects, the less are we content with the knowledge that we can gather from this study. We may devote the whole of our lives, and spend all the energy we possess, in trying to satisfy this craving for knowledge of the Infinite, and also by studying the phenomenal world; but this thirst for knowledge will not be quenched; it will remain, as it does in all the great thinkers of the world. We may read books, philosophies, sciences, and scriptures, but the longing of the soul will never be fulfilled by reading books. There is only one way to quench this thirst and that is by realizing the Infinite.

The word 'realize' means something more than ordinary knowing. By 'realizing' we mean being and becoming one with the Infinite. If we can know that the all-pervading Being is the Essence of our lives and the Soul of our souls, we become more and more acquainted with that Infinite and understand its whole nature—not the objective side alone, and not merely

as the material substance, but as the infinite mind substance, and also as that which transcends this substance of mental phenomena. I mean, when we have realized the Infinite Spirit, when we have found that It is the source of all powers and forces as well as the basis of our consciousness, the foundation of our existence, and the life and the reality of the universe, then the thirst for knowledge is quenched; then all questions regarding the existence of God are answered, all doubts cease forever.

But it may be asked: How can we know the supreme Being as the Soul of our souls? We know it by rising above the plane of consciousness of the finite. This plane of consciousness will never reveal the true nature of the Infinite Being, because it functions within the limitations of the senses; consequently, it cannot reach the infinite which is above all limits. We may have a vague perception of it, or we may think of it as the subject or object, as mind or matter; but that is not the same as realization of the absolute One. If we can rise above time and space, shutting out all sense objects and making the mind impervious to all sensations of external objects, if we can then direct the whole energy of mind and soul toward the Infinite within us, then we shall be able to realize the Soul of our souls, and then the truth of the existence of God will be revealed to us.

If we wish to know God, we shall have to enter into the state of superconsciousness. All the great spiritual leaders of the world, Jesus the Christ, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and others, who preached the existence of God, first realized Him by entering into the state of superconsciousness. Those, who have studied *Raja Yoga*[1] and have practised it, will understand what superconsciousness means. All revelation and inspiration come in that state. The longing for more knowledge has led the river of the soul into the ocean of Infinite Wisdom. In that state the individual soul realizes the blissfulness, which is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, and which cannot be obtained by wealth, property, or worldly prosperity. Friends and relatives cannot help us in rising to that blissful condition. It is a state, attaining which nothing remains unattainable, realizing which, the true nature of everything is revealed. It is a state, in which our desire remains unfulfilled in which the individual soul, tran-

[1] *'Raja Yoga,'* by Swami Vivekananda. Published under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of New York.

*scending all limitations, becomes one with the Infinite and en-*joys unbounded happiness both here and hereafter. Such a knower of the Infinite says:

'I have attained everything that is to be attained, I have realized all that can be realized. I have known that Infinite Being that is worshipped under different names by different nations as God, or Father in heaven, or Allah, or Buddha, or Christ, or Divine Mother, or Brahman.'

CHAPTER II

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

'The Supreme Spirit is devoid of the defining attributes of form, colour, etc. He is unchangeable, unborn, eternal, indestructible, imperishable and is always of one nature. He is pure and the repository of all blessed qualities.'—Vishnu-Purana.

God is described in different scriptures as a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, true, and one; the omnipotent and omniscient Creator and Governor of the universe, and the repository of all blessed qualities, such as justice, goodness, mercy, and love. If we ask a Christian, a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Parsee, a Hindu, or a follower of any other sect or creed, what is his conception of God, each one of them will quote passages from his Scriptures, giving the same attributes to the divine Being, whom they worship under various names, such as Father in heaven, Jehovah, Allah, Ahura Mazda, or Brahman. The names may vary, but the attributes of God are with each exactly the same.

A Catholic priest who bows down before the image of Jesus the Christ and prays to Him and burns incense and lights candles, a protestant clergyman who does not believe in bowing down before any image, a Mohammedan priest who is a fanatical inconoclast and denies all forms of God, or a Hindu priest who worships an idol in a temple, invariably agree with one another in describing the attributes of the God they worship. There is no difference between the God of a Christian, or a Mohammedan, or a Parsee, or a Hindu, because each of them believes that God is infinite and one.

How can there be many Gods, when their attributes are the same and identical everywhere? Yet a Christian calls the Hindu a heathen, and a Mohammedan calls a Christian an unbeliever, and each in turn quarrels with the other. Why is there so much persecution, if God is one? Because of the ignorance of His believers. They do not even try to understand the true meaning of any of the attributes which they give to God:

their eyes are blinded by ignorance, fanaticism, and bigotry. Stimulated by false belief and superstition, they maintain that their God is the only true God, while the God of other nations is untrue, and they cannot see that everyone worships the same infinite Being. Fanatical Christians preach: 'Beware of the God of the heathen, He cannot give salvation to His worshippers', as if, there were two Gods.

Ignorance is the mother of fanaticism, bigotry, superstition, and of all that springs from them. Fanatics cannot realize that God is the common property of all, that whether He be worshipped by a Christian or by a Hindu, He is one, because His attributes are identical. Among those who are not so fanatical, there are many who give the same attributes to God without, however, understanding their true meaning. Ninety per cent of monotheists all over the world say: 'God is infinite and one,' but, at the same time, they think of some being with a human form sitting somewhere outside the universe. If we ask them the meaning of the word 'infinite', their answers are often full of illogical nonsense. They will make God as finite as possible and bring forward all sorts of fallacious arguments to support their position.

Those who believe in a personal God, give Him a human form, human attributes, and a human personality without realizing that they are making their Lord limited in power, personality, and attributes. Of course it is not their fault; it is quite natural that they should think of the Ruler of the universe as a human being, because we are all human beings, and the limit of our conception is a human being. Our world is a human world, our God must be a human God, and our explanattion of the universe must also be human. As having seen the governor of a country, who is a human being with certain powers, we form a concept and keep it in our minds, so we conceive the supreme Being as the governor of the universe. Naturally, we give Him a human form and a human personality, only with this difference that the governor of the country is limited in power, size, and qualifications, while the Ruler of the universe is unlimited in power and immensely magnified in size and qualifications; yet, however great He may be, He must still appear more or less like a human being. In this way our explanation of the universe has become human, and our God has

acquired a human form and personality. If a cow became a philosopher and had a religion, her conception of God would be in cow form, her explanation of the universe would be through that cow god. She would not be able to comprehend our Lord at all. Similarly, if a tiger had a god, his conception would be of a tiger form. If there be a being with a form different from ours, with a nature higher than ours, his God will be like himself. As we do not know what conception of God the people of Mars have, we cannot know their God; if they are not like human beings, their conception will differ from ours. So none of these pictures of God and none of these explanations of the universe can be complete in itself. It may be a partial truth, but not the whole truth. Therefore, all those conceptions of God, which we so often hear—that He is like a human being sitting on a throne outside the universe and from there governing the universe by His powers, are incomplete and imperfect.

But ordinary people do not see this. Each is sure that his conception and explanation are the best. They cannot realize how there can be anything higher or greater than what they already believe. Yet, when they are asked, 'what are the attributes of such a human God?' they will say: 'He is a spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, true, and one; He is the omniscient and omnipotent Creator and the repository of all blessed qualities'. Thus they unconsciously make God finite and infinite at the same time. Can there be anything more absurd and self-contradictory than a finite infinite God! If He is finite, He is limited by time, space, and causation, must have a beginning and an end, and cannot be unchangeable. A finite God must be changeable and must perish like all mortal things. Are we ready to believe in such a perishable God? Not for a moment. We cannot give any form to God, because form means limitation in space by time. By giving a form to God, we make Him subject to time, space, and the law of causation; consequently, we make Him mortal like any other object of the phenomenal universe which has form. God with a form cannot be immortal and eternal, He must die. Therefore, we cannot say that God is finite or that He has any form.

He is infinite. But, let us have a clear understanding of the meaning of this word 'infinite', and use it in its proper sense.

That, which is not limited by time and space and not subject to the law of causation, which is above time, space, and beyond all laws, is infinite. God is not limited by time or space, neither has He any cause. He is absolute. The infinite, again, must be one, otherwise it is finite. If there be any other thing beside that infinite, then it is no longer infinite; it is limited by that object; consequently, it has become finite. Thus, if we admit that God is infinite, we deny the existence of any other thing besides God; otherwise He would be limited by that thing, and be subject to time, space, and the law of causation.

If we say that matter exists separate from and outside of God, we have made Him limited by matter, we have made Him finite and perishable. If we think of ourselves as separate from God, as independent of His Being, then in our thought we have denied His illimitable nature. There is for the same reason, not a single particle of matter in the universe that can exist independent of God's existence or outside of God; if He is infinite and one, our bodies and everything of the universe, from the minutest atom to the largest planetary system, from the lowest animalcule to the highest Being, exists in and through that infinite Existence. This may be startling to many, but the fact cannot be denied. If we wish to be logical, if the word 'infinite' conveys any meaning at all, we cannot avoid the logical conclusion which must inevitably follow. If, on the contrary, we use the word 'infinite' meaning something finite, how foolish and illogical shall we be! The conclusion is this: If God is infinite and one, then mind and matter, subject and object, creator and creation, and all relative dual existences are within that Being, and not outside of it. The whole universe is in God and God is in it; it is inseparable from God. I am in Him and He is in me; each one of us is inseparable from His being; if one atom of my body exists, that existence cannot be separated from His existence.

We have now understood the meaning of the two attributes infinite and one. Let us examine the meaning of other attributes. God is unchangeable, that is, He is always the same and never subject to any change whatsoever, because He is eternal, without beginning or end. That which has a beginning must have an end, and go through all the changes of birth, growth, decay, and death; everything that has a beginning must grow;

decay, and die. That which is limited by time and space must go through all these changes, which, on the contrary, never affect the infinite Being.

God is a spirit. What is to be understood by spirit? It does not mean a shadowy form or an apparition. By this term is meant pure, self-luminous intelligence, the source of all consciousness, the basis and foundation of all knowledge, the background of mind and matter, of subject and object. Again, He is true. That which is not God is untrue or unreal; or, in other words, that which is finite, manifold, changeable, non-eternal, transitory, is untrue and unreal. Furthermore, God is omnipresent and omniscient, and upon Him depends the existence of mind and matter, of subject and object. Let us understand this a little more clearly. Whatever exists in the universe, whether mental or physical, subjective or objective, can exist only as related to a self-conscious intelligence. When we analyse our perceptions, we find that, that which is not related to any state of our consciousness does not exist in relation to us, because we do not know anything about it. Existence and knowledge or consciousness are inseparable.

As our small worlds of which we are conscious, exist in relation to our conscious being, so the phenomenal universe can only exist as being related to the knowledge of the cosmic knower or the universal Being; otherwise there cannot be any existence, because existence and knowledge, existence and consciousness are inseparable; therefore, God is called omniscient or all-knowing. Nothing exists without being related directly to the intelligence and knowledge of the infinite Being. As this infinite Being pervades the universe and interpenetrates every particle of matter, giving existence to everyhing, so the light of His knowledge pervades the universe; therefore, He is omnipresent and omniscient. If these various conceptions, obtained by analysing the attributes of God, be summed up, we shall learn that God is the absolute Being, eternal, true, and everlasting, the one infinite ocean of self-existence, self-luminous intelligence, which is the source of all consciousness. Nothing can exist outside of or independent of that one omnipresent and omniscient Being of the universe.

Here a question arises,—if there be no other being besides God, what will become of the diverse phenomena of the uni-

verse, which we perceive with our senses? Do they not exist? Yes, they do, but their existence depends upon God. They have no separate and independent existence; they are like froth, bubbles, and waves on that infinite ocean of intelligence. As a wave cannot exist for a moment independent of the ocean, so the phenomena of the world depend for their existence upon the absolute Being.

This ocean of pure self-luminous intelligence and existence is described in Vedanta by the word Brahman, which means absolute Existence and Intelligence, the unlimited source of knowledge and of consciousness; while the power which produces these waves of phenomena is called *maya*. This inscrutable power of *maya* dwells in the infinite ocean of Reality or Brahman from eternity to eternity. It is as inseparable from the divine Being as the power of burning is inseparable from fire. Sometimes this power remains latent as undifferentiated cosmic energy, and sometimes it manifests itself as the various forces of nature. When that power is latent, all phenomena disappear, and dissolution or involution takes place; but, when it begins to express itself as natural forces, it produces the waves and bubbles of phenomena in the ocean of Brahman. Then the absolute Being seen through the active or manifesting power of *maya* or cosmic energy, appears as the Creator and Governor of the universe.

He is called in Sanskrit 'Isvara', which means also the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He is the first-born lord, or the cosmic ego. This cosmic ego, Isvara or Lord, is called the Creator of the universe. Here, let us understand clearly, in what sense God can be properly called the Creator of the world. Does He create it out of nothing, as described in the monotheistic and dualistic Scriptures of the Christians, the Jews, the Mohammedans, and the Parsees? No, He does not create anything out of nothing; He is not the creator in that sense. In the first place, we must not forget the truth, discovered and established by ancient and modern science, that something cannot come out of nothing; consequently, to a scientific mind, creation out of nothing has no meaning. The theory of a special creation of the world as we read in the Genesis has been proved to be an unscientific myth. Secondly, the doctrine of evolution is now so unquestionably established, that we can

safely accept it in the place of the mythical story of special creation. Therefore, when we speak of God as the Creator of the universe, we do not mean one, who brought the world into existence out of nothing, as our forefathers understood by this expression; but, applying the light of science and being guided by the reasoning of the Vedanta philosophy, we must understand that Isvara is called the Creator, because, He projects out of His own being, the powers existing there potentially and makes them active. Thus the word creator means the projector of all forces and of all phenomenal forms which potentially existed as eternal energy in Isvara. That projection from the potential into the kinetic or active state takes place gradually through the process of the evolution of the *maya* or the cosmic energy which dwells in the Isvara of Vedanta. Vedanta teaches that, although Brahman or the absolute Being or Godhead is above all activity, still Isvara is full of power and action. He starts the evolution of the cosmic energy which, before the beginning of the cyclic evolution, held all phenomenal names and forms in its bosom. Isvara, according to Vedanta, is both the material and the efficient cause of the universe. He does not create matter, but matter is only a certain state or mode of motion of the universal divine Energy. When the dormant power of *maya* begins to manifest, all material forms commence to appear.

The next attribute of Isvara is that of Ruler or Governor of the universe. How does He govern? Does He govern the world from outside, as it is said in the Christian scriptures? No, He governs from within and never from without. He is the *Antaryamin,* the internal Ruler of the universe. As the soul is the internal ruler of the body, so Isvara, being the Soul of the universe, governs it from within and not from outside.

He is the repository of all blessed qualities, that is, all that is good, all that is great, all that is sublime; is but the expression of the divine power. But God Himself is above good and evil, beyond virtue and vice, above all relativity, and beyond all conditions. He loves all beings equally and impartially; He does not love one nation for certain qualifications and hate other nations, but He loves every living soul, whether human or animal, equally. Just as the sun shines alike upon the heads of sages and sinners, so the love of that divine Being

touches the souls of all. Why does He love all beings equally? Because each individual soul is related to God as a part is related to the whole. As a part cannot exist independently, so our souls cannot exist independent of the soul of the universe. Therefore, we live and move and exist in and through the whole, or Isvara. God loves His parts, because He cannot help it. How can it be otherwise? How is it possible for a whole not to love its own parts? Love means the expression of oneness. At the bottom of all earthly love, exists this idea of oneness; the lover and the beloved must be one, one in spirit, in thoughts, in ideas, in everything; otherwise, there is no real love. Therefore God is all-loving. Thus, if we try, with the aid of the light of science and reason, to understand the true significance of the attributes of God, we are forcibly driven to the conclusions of Vedanta. With the help of Vedanta, we can realize the true relation which the universe bears to God, which the individual soul bears to the infinite Being.

If we once understand that God is the source of all existence and power and is the one Reality, that outside of God no existence is possible, then we begin to feel the presence of divinity everywhere. In every action of our lives, we realize that the divine power is working through us, and, at every moment of our earthly existence, we feel ourselves to be like so many instruments through which the divine will is manifesting itself and doing whatever He ordains. All the actions of our lives are, then, turned into acts of worship of the supreme Deity. Being dead to selfishness, we are, then, able to say from the bottom of our hearts, 'O Lord, Thy will, not mine, be done.'

All fear then vanishes, all sins are redeemed, and the individual soul becomes free from the bondage of ignorance and selfishness. This realization leads to a still higher and closer union with the Divine. The soul gradually realizes spiritual oneness with the universal Spirit or Brahman. Thus, having attained to Godconsciousness, which is the highest ideal of all religions, the individual soul becomes like Christ, and declares, 'I and my Father are one.'

CHAPTER III

HAS GOD ANY FORM?

'The all-pervading, omnipotent, and formless Spirit manifests Himself in various forms under different names to fulfil the desires of His worshippers.'—Vishnu Purana.

Students of the Old Testament are familiar with the fact that the ancient Israelites conceived their God—Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord God, as possessing human attributes and a human form. There are many passages which testify that God walked with Adam and Eve and spoke to them; He ate and drank with the elders of Israel; and the Lord said to Moses: 'I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by, and I will take my hand away and thou shalt see my back parts; but my face shalt not be seen.' (Ex. xxxiii, 22, 23.) Yahveh was the Lord of the House of Israel. He was, moreover, not only the God of Abraham and of Moses, but He became the supreme Being and the only God above all gods. Upon this conception of the supreme Being, with a human form and human personality, have been built the structures of the two great monotheistic or dualistic religions, Judaism and Christianity.

The same Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord of the house of Israel, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob, and of Moses, is the almighty Creator, Ruler, and Father in heaven of the Jews and the Christians of the present day. He sits on a throne outside the universe, having a right hand and a left hand, and according to the Christian belief, Jesus sits at His right hand. Neither Christ nor Moses, nor any of the prophets had to introduce a new God among the Jews. All of them accepted and worshipped the same Elohim or Yahveh, who was at first only the tribal god of the house of Israel. Here we must not forget the original meaning of the word 'Elohim', which, although translated into English in the Old Testament as God, at first meant 'that which is feared' and was sometimes used vaguely to describe unseen powers or 'objects of man's fear', or superhuman beings not properly regarded as divine in their nature.

It was also applied to a disembodied soul, which was conceived as the image of the body in which it once dwelt, as for example, we read in First Samuel (ch. 38, v. 13) that the witch of Endor saw 'Elohim ascending out of the earth', meaning thereby some being or disembodied spirit of an unearthly, superhuman character.

This word 'Elohim' was the plural form of 'Eloah' and was also used to denote the gods of the heathen. It was a generic name given to supernatural characters of all kinds having quasi-corporeal forms, as well as to the gods of different tribes. Chemosh, Dagon, Baal, Yahveh were all known as Elohim and each of them had a human form. But, in spite of its plural meaning, the Hebrew prophets used it especially for Yahveh, the god of Israel. The Israelites, however, believed Yahveh to be immeasurably superior to the Elohim of other tribes: while the inscription on the Moabite stone shows that King Mesa held Chemosh to be as unquestionably the superior of Yahveh. It is said: 'So now Yahveh, the Elohim of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorites from before His people Israel, and shouldst thou possess it? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy Elohim giveth thee to possess?' (Judges xi, 23, 24.) The Israelites of those days considered the difference between one Elohim and another to be one of degree and not of kind. The same word was likewise applied to Teraphim, the images of family gods, which were only deceased ancestors. Laban asks his son-in-law most indignantly, 'Wherefore hast thou stolen my Elohim?'

From a careful study of the Old Testament we see that, although the Israelites believed in many kinds of Elohim and used the word indiscriminately, Yahveh was the god of their tribe, while other tribes had Elohim of their own. When the house of Israel conquered any other tribe, their tribal god Yahveh stood at the head of the gods of the conquered tribe, as we know from history. When the Babylonians and Chaldeans were conquered by the Israelites, Yahvch was placed above Bel, Baal, Merodoch, Moloch, and the other Elohim or gods of the conquered tribes. Thus, by the gradual process of evolution Elohim or Yahveh became the king or Lord of all gods. We can now easily understand what the Hebrew Psalmist meant, when he said: 'Among the gods there is none like

unto thee, the King above all gods.' But, although Yahveh became the supreme Lord of all gods, hence of all tribes and nations, he still did not lose his human form, human attributes and human personality. Even, when he became the creator and ruler of the universe, he had the same human form, the same attributes and personality as were ascribed to him by the ancient Israelites. A belief in many gods was at the foundation of the Judaic conception of one supreme Being, and Yahveh, the tribal god originally worshipped under the form of a bull, gradually evolved into 'god of gods' and finally into the one and only God of the universe.

In like manner, it can be shown that among the ancient Greeks and other Aryan nations, the idea of a personal god, with a human form, gradually developed from a belief in many tribal gods or nature gods. All monotheistic conceptions can be traced back to polytheistic beliefs. The ancient Greeks, like all other primitive peoples, worshipped many nature gods. They perceived the forces of nature and gave to them human powers and attributes. We know that Zeus, Apollo, Athene were all personified powers of nature. Zeus originally meant sky, hence god of the sky, the god of rain, or rainer. The old prayer of the Athenians was, 'Rain, rain, O dear Zeus, on the land of the Athenians and on the fields'. Here, 'O dear Zeus' or 'dear sky' at once brings in the personal element. 'Dear sky' refers to the god of the sky, the governor of rain. Appollo, again, was the sun god; Athene, the dawn-goddess. Each of these mythological deities was, furthermore, originally the god of some family or clan, and afterward, when one family became stronger than others, its family god stood at the head of the other gods; thus, in course of time, the ancient God Zeus-pitar, or in Latin, Jupiter, meaning in English, Father in heaven, became the God of all gods and was supposed to be the God of all nations.

So it was in ancient India during the Vedic period. The Vedic poets at first personified the forces of nature and gave them human attributes and intelligence. They were called in Sanskrit *'devas'* or 'Bright Ones', such as Indra, the rainer or thunderer; Agni, the god of fire; Vayu, the god of storm or wind; Varuna, the god of the sky; and so on. Eventually, Varuna, lord of the sky, became *deva-deva*, the god of all gods,

and thus, gradually arose in India, the monotheistic conception of the supreme personal God with human attributes. It can, in the same way, be shown that the tribal gods among the Semitic tribes were at first nothing but nature gods.

It may be asked here: Why were the forces of nature personified? Because, primitive man could not help it. Wherever he saw any activity or motion, he compared it to the conscious activity of his own body or to the voluntary movements of his limbs, and explained this natural activity by imagining it to be the conscious act of some superhuman being, possessing will-power and intelligence and was called the mover. From this, we can easily understand the reason for the ancient belief that all material objects like the sun, moon, and stars, were moved by angels. Now we say 'it rains' or 'it thunders', but the primitive man used to say, 'he rains', 'he thunders'. In this manner, the unscientific minds of ancient times came to a belief in natural agencies. These agents were like human beings, only more powerful than any mortal agent. Hence, was developed the idea of superhuman beings, who became tribal gods and who were invoked in time of need. The Lord of the universe and the King above all gods was necessarily infinitely more powerful than these superhuman agents of nature, but still he had a human form infinitely magnified in size, because it is extremely difficult for the human mind to go beyond the idea of a human God.

From ancient times, however, strong protests have been made by great thinkers against this human idea of God with human form and human attributes ; but, again and again, these objections have been brushed aside by the vast majority of people. Xenophanes, the Greek philosopher, about the sixth century before Christ, tried to overthrow this anthropomorphic conception of God. He said: 'The Godhead is all eyes, all ears, all understanding, unmoved, undivided, calmly ruling everything by his thought, like men neither in form nor in understading'. The early Christians, who were brought up in the schools of Plato and Aristotle, also deprecated the idea of a human God. To them, the supreme Being was no longer simply Elohim or Yahveh, the Lord of the house of Israel ; not merely the God of Abraham, Issac, and Jacob, the God who walked in the garden of Eden in the cool of the day and ate

and drank; He was no longer even the God 'who maketh the clouds His chariot, who walketh upon the wings of the wind', but a supreme Being who was infinite, indescribable, unutterable, and whose form could not be seen with fleshly eyes, whose voice could not be heard with mortal ear, whose size was incomprehensible. Clement of Alexandria says: 'There is no name that can properly be named of Him; neither the one, nor the good, nor mind, nor absolute Being, nor Father, nor Creator, nor Lord can be the appropriate name for Him'. And Cardinal Newman declares: 'God is incommunicable in all His attributes'.

Not very long ago, the Bishop of London also protested against the human God, saying: 'There is a sense in which we cannot ascribe personality to the unknown, absolute Being; for, our sense of personality is of necessity compassed with limitations, and, from these limitations, we find it impossible to separate our conception of a person'. When, indeed, we speak of human personality, we include appearance, the expression of the face and so on.

Those who believe in a personal God with a human form and human attributes, do not consider these limitations They do not think for a moment: How is it possible for the infinite eternal Being to be confined within the limits of a human form, however magnified it may be? How is it possible for the absolute Being to come under the limitations of time and space? Physical form is nothing but limitation in space and time, and, if the eternal and infinite God be above time and space, how can He have a physical form? Yet most of the dualistic religions teach that God has a form, and ask us to believe in it, and to worship Him as one with form. How are we going to reconcile this self-contradictory statement that God is the infinite eternal Being with a finite form? We do not find any solution of the difficulty in any of the Scriptures of the three great Semitic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism. Of these Christianity conceives God under a triune form, while Judaism and Mohammedanism insist on the absolute unity of the supreme Being. Where is, then, the solution of the problem? If God be infinite and all-pervading, how can He have form?

The dualists or monotheists believe in the supreme Being

with a human form, but they say that, that form is not material or physical but spiritual. It cannot be seen by the physical eye, but it can be seen by the spiritual eye of an enligtened soul. According to the dualistic system of religion in India, the infinite, eternal, unknowable Being or Substance of the universe. which is called in Sanskrit 'Brahman', is the source of all powers and all forms. Although it is formless like the infinite ocean of Reality or of absolute existence, intelligence and bliss, it, nevertheless, contains in a potential state all the forms of the waves that can arise in that eternal ocean. The water of the ocean has no particular form or shape; we can say that it is formless in one sense, but at the same time it can take any form when frozen into ice. A block of ice, for instanace, can appear in the form of a triangle, sphere, a circle, an animal, or a human being. The same water without losing its nature can appear in a solidified form; and, as in this case, we are justified in saying that water, although formless, contains in a potential state all imaginable forms within itself, so the water of the ocean of that absolute Reality possesses in a potential state all the physical, material, mental, and spiritual forms that ever existed, or ever will exist in future.

The infinite and eternal Brahman does, indeed, appear and manifest Itself with a spiritual form, in order to satisfy the desire of the devotee or worshipper. Wherever there is intense longing to see God, wherever there is unflinching devotion and unselfish love with the whole heart and soul, there is the manifestation of the formless One to fulfil the desire of the devotee. It is then that the invisible Brahman, or the supreme Being, or the Reality, manifests Itself and becomes visible to the spiritual eye of the worshipper. Intense longing, unswerving devotion, and whole-hearted love of the soul draw out from the infinite source any particular form which the devotee wishes to see and worship; they have the power, as it were, to condense and solidify the water of the ocean of Reality into various forms. The spiritual form of the Divinity rises in the ocean of formless Brahman or of the absolute Godhead, floats there for some time, and after satisfying the desires of the true *bhakta* or worshipper, merges into that ocean again.

These forms vary in accordance with the ideal of the worshipper. If a worshipper has a longing to see God in the form

to which he is devoted, of Jehovah or of Christ, for instance, he must draw that out of the infinite ocean. The Divinity will appear in that form to satisfy the desire of that devotee. If he be devoted to the form of Buddha, or Krishna, or Ramakrishna, or any other human or imaginary form, he will see such a one with his spiritual eye through intense longing and love. The personal God with a spiritual form is the objectification, projection, manifestation of the impersonal ocean of Divinity. The highest of all such manifestations is the Isvara of Vedanta. He is worshipped under various names as Vishnu, Jehovah, Shiva, Father in heaven, or Allah. As all-pervading heat is imperceptible, but becomes perceptible through friction, so wherever there is intense friction of devotion and love in the soul of the worshipper, there is the manifestation of that infinite Being either in human or superhuman form. There have been many such instances, where the absolute omnipresent Being manifested itself in various forms among all nations and in all countries.

In ancient times, there lived a boy saint who was the son of a ruling monarch. His name was Prahlada. His father was absolutely materialistic and atheistic in his belief, and could not bear the idea of a ruler greater and more powerful than himself. He believed in no other ruler of the world and through vanity and egotism thought that he was the lord of all. His son Prahlada, however, was a born saint. From his childhood his heart and soul were filled with extreme faith, devotion, and love for the almighty Ruler and Lord of the universe. He cared nothing for the world and found no pleasure in the luxuries and comforts of a princely life. They did not attract his mind. He always preferred to stay alone and had a tendency to renounce everything. So deeply absorbed was his mind in his divine Ideal that he could not listen to other things, and it was impossible for him to obey the commands of his godless father. The king grew angry at his behaviour, and one day, calling the prince to him, he asked him the reason of his disobedience. He inquired, under whose instigation he was behaving in that way and acting rebelliously against him who was the Lord of all. The boy saint replied: 'The Ruler of the universe, the Lord of all nations, who is greater and more powerful than your majesty, has captured my heart and soul and has inspired me to behave in this way'. At this reply, the king,

furious with rage and anger, was ready to punish his son by killing him instantly. Drawing his sword, he cried: 'How dost thou dare to say that thou hast a lord more powerful or stronger than I? Where is thy lord? Show him to me!' The boy answered: 'He is everywhere'. The king demanded, 'Is he in that pillar?' Prahlada, praying to his divine Ideal from the bottom of his heart and soul and with firm faith rejoined: 'Yes, He is there in that pillar'. The king answered: 'Now ask thy lord to save thee from being beheaded'. Thus saying, he struck the pillar with a giant's might and knocked it down. In the midst of the thundering noise of the crash, appeared the divine figure, radiant with celestial glory, to protect the devotee of the almighty Lord. The eyes of the wicked monarch were dazzled by the extraordinary brightness and celestial lustre of the divine form, but he could not bear the sight of another lord beside himself. He attacked the divine manifestation, and, in his attempt to conquer the supreme Ruler, he fell breathless on the spot. Such was the power of true faith. Can any one question the power of true faith when Jesus said: 'for verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you' (Matt. xvii, 20). That faith brought out the manifestation of the omnipresent Lord from the pillar. At the sight of this wonderful divine power and glory of the Almighty, the soul of the boy saint was filled with unbounded joy and ecstatic happiness. He approached the mighty figure with awe, reverence, and devotion, and prostrating himself at His feet, he poured fourth all prayers before Him to his heart's content, saying: 'O Lord, the almighty Ruler of the universe, Thou art indeed all-pervading and almighty. Thy power is inscrutable. To save Thy child from imminent death, to fulfil the desire of Thy true devotee and to punish this vain and egotistical earthly monarch, Thou hast shown Thy power and glory to all by making this Thy superhuman manifestation. What words are adequate to describe Thy majesty and Thy loving-kindness? All words that we can utter are Thine! I am Thy child and Thy servant; keep me in Thy service forever and ever, O Lord and Father of all animate and inanimate beings of the universe.

'O Lord, Thou art the goal of all religions, and the sus-

tainer, the master, the witness, the habitation, the refuge and the friend of all living creatures; Thou art the origin, dissolution, support, end, and the inexhaustible seed of the whole manifested universe. Thou art one, yet Thou takest many forms through Thy unspeakable power of *maya*. I bow down and salute Thee. Whosoever knows Thee as formless and with form knows the eternal Truth.'

CHAPTER IV

FATHERHOOD AND MOTHERHOOD OF GOD

'I am the Father and Mother of the universe.'—Bhagavad Gita, ix, 17.
'Why does the God-lover find such pleasure in addressing the Deity as Mother? Because the child is more free with its Mother, and consequently she is dearer to the child than any one else.'—Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna, by F. Max Müller, p. 118.

The religious history of the world shows that the conception of God as the Father of the universe first arose among the Aryan nations, and not among any of the Semitic tribes. It was in ancient India that the Aryans first worshipped the supreme Being by addressing Him as the Father in Heaven. The origin of the English word 'father' can be traced back through Latin 'pater' and Greek 'pitar' to Sanskrit '*pitar*' meaning father. The Christians, however, believe that before the advent of Jesus the Christ, the fatherhood of the almighty Being was unknown to the world.

Not very long ago, the famous Rt. Rev. Bishop Potter of New York said in one of his lectures: 'Go to India, to Burma, to China, to Greece; or to Egypt or Rome and see, if anywhere among them all you will find a religion with any other idea of man than that he is the mere creature of his governor, his Pharaoh, his Sultan, his Rajah, his proconsul, or by whatever name you choose to call it.' He also said: 'It was Christ who brought an entirely new conception of the relation of God to men.' Such statements, however, are neither founded upon truth nor supported by any historical evidence. On the contrary, it is a well-known fact that in India, from prehistoric times, the Hindu religion has given to man a position much higher than the Christian concption of his relation to his Maker. The ancient vedic sages were the first to declare before the world that the human soul is not only the child of God, but that it is essentially divine and in its true nature is one with the supreme Being.

According to the Hebrew religion, the relation of God to

man was like that of an absolute monarch to his subject, or like that of a master to his slave; while the religious history of the ancient Aryan nations testifies that they had risen to a much higher conception of God than as a despotic Ruler long before the Christian era. The Christian missionaries and preachers have been trumpeting before the world for several centuries that no religion outside of Christianity has ever inculcated the idea of the Fatherhood of God, and that it was Christ alone who brought it to men from his celestial abode. Moreover, they are especially eager to impress upon the minds of their co-religionists that the Hindus in particular had no conception of a heavenly Father, that they never knew the fatherly relation of God to man. But those, who have studied carefully the history of the growth of Christianity, are familiar with the fact that the idea of the Fatherhood of God did not originate with Jesus the Christ as modern Christians believe, but existed in the religious atmosphere of northern Palestine from the second century B.C. as a result of the Hellenic influence upon Judaism of the worship of Jupiter. Jesus took up this grand Aryan idea of the Fatherhood of God and emphasized it in his teachings more strongly than any of his predecessors had done in Palestine.[1] It was Yahveh that Christ worshipped as his Heavenly Father, it was Yahveh to whom he prayed as the Father of the universe; consequently, those who follow Christ and his teachings, worship their God through the same relation as was established by their Master. The worship of God is impossible without having some kind of relation between the worshipper and the object of worship.

The relation between father and son is much higher than that between the creator and his creatures as it had existed in Judaism. The transition from the Judaic relation between God and man to that of father and son was, therefore, a great step toward the realization of the spiritual unity of the individual soul and the universal Spirit. It was no longer an external relation to power and strength, but had become a kind of kinship of internal blood relation such as exists between an earthly father and his son. There is a tie of love that binds a son to his father, and such a tie brings the individual soul nearer to

[1] Vide p. 173: *Son of God.*

the Creator of the universe. As the earthly father of an individual is ordinarily considered to be his creator, because of his begetting him and bringing him into existence out of an invisible germ, so, when the undeveloped mind began to think of the creation of the universe, it imagined that the creator was one, who brought the world into existence and produced it out of nothing. Gradually the conception of the creator evolved into that of the father of the universe.

All our conceptions of God begin with anthropomorphism, that is, with giving to God human attributes in a greatly magnified degree, and end in de-anthropomorphism, or making Him free from human attributes. At the first stage, the human mind conceives of the creator as a great Being, who dwells outside the world which he creates, just as the father is separate from the son whom he begets. The Hebrew conception of Yahveh was purely anthropomorphic. Yahveh possessed all human attributes, and, dwelling in a heaven outside the universe, created the world out of nothing, fashioned it, and afterward became its governor. The same Yahveh, when addressed by Jesus the Christ as the Father in heaven, did not lose his Yahvehic nature, but was simply endowed with the fatherly aspect of Jupiter or the Greek Zeus-pitar. The sweet, loving, and fatherly attributes of Jupiter were superadded to the stern, extra-cosmic Yahveh, the despotic ruler of the world.

The word Jupiter, or Zeus-pitar, has a long history behind it, with which ordinary readers are not familiar, but which is known to a few Vedic scholars. It meant 'father in heaven' and is a transmuted form of the Sanskrit *dyus-pitar* or *dyaus-pitar,* which very often occurs in the Rig Veda, the oldest of the revealed scriptures of the world. The term *'dyaus'* or *'dyus'* originally signified 'shining space' or 'heavens', but afterwards it was used for the self-effulgent Spirit dwelling in the heavens ; and 'pitar' was the father and the protector. In the second book of the Rig Veda (ch. iii, ver. 20), we read, *'Dyaus me pita janita nabhi ratra'.* Here the word *'dyaus'* is used, not in the sense of 'shining heavens' as some of the Oriental scholars have imagined, but it refers to the spiritual Source of all light as well as of heavens. *'Pita',* literally 'father', here means 'protector'. The meaning of this verse, therefore, is, 'That shining or self-effulgent Spirit, who dwells in the heavens, is my father and

protector, my progenitor or producer, and in Him lies the source of all things'. This was the earliest conception of the fatherly aspect of the supreme Being, which we find in studying the Vedas. Again, in the tenth book of the Rig Veda, Prajapati, the Lord of all creatures, is addressed as 'pitar', the father and protector (ch. v, ver. 6, 7).

The one supreme personal God was called in the Vedas Prajapati', the Lord and Father of all creatures. He is most beautifully described in the one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rig Veda. The conception of a personal God, which we find in this hymn, has not been surpassed by the idea of a personal God among any other nation during the last five thousand years. When an ancient Vedic seer was asked, 'To whom shall we offer our prayers and sacrifices?' he replied:

1. 'In the beginning there arose the Prajapati, the first-born Lord of all that exists. He holds by his power the heavens and the earth. To Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

2. 'Prajapati, the Lord of all creatures, who gives life and strength to all that exists, from whose body emanate the individual souls like sparks from fire; who is the purifier of all souls; whose commands all creatures revere and obey; whose shadow is immortality and mortality; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

3. 'Who by His power and glory became the one King (without a second) of all men, of beasts, nay, of all animate and inanimate objects; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

4. 'Whose greatness is manifested in the snow-capped ranges of mountains and in the waters of the rivers and the oceans; whose arms are spread on all sides; to Him should we offer our prayers and sacrifices.

5. 'Who made the sky strong and the earth firm, who established heavens in their places, nay, the highest heaven; who measured the light in the air; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

6. 'To whom heaven and earth, standing firm by His help, look up, trembling in their minds, and by whose support the

rising sun shines forth; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

7. 'When the great waters went everywhere, holding the germ and generating fire, thence He arose who is the sole life of the bright spirits (*devas*); to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

8. 'Who is the one Lord of all living beings and God above all gods; who by His might looked over the causal waters at the time of dissolution; to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

9. 'May He not injure us, He who is the Creator of the earth, heavens, and bright and mighty waters, who is the foundation of truth, righteousness, and justice: to Him we should offer our prayers and sacrifices.

10. 'O Prajapati, no other but Thou hast held together all these phenomena; whatever we desire in sacrificing to Thee, may that be ours; may we be the lords of all wealth.'

The same Prajapati, the true, just, and righteous Lord of the universe and God of all gods, was addressed by the Vedic Sage as *'Dyaus-Pitar'* or the Father in heaven and Protector of all. He is described in another hymn of the Rig Veda as Aditi, the unflinching and immutable support of the phenomenal universe. The word 'Aditi' signified the motherly aspect of the divine Being. 'Aditi is in the heavens and in the illumined space that pervades between heaven and earth, the Mother of all *devas* or gods as well as the Creator of all animate and inanimate objects. She is also the Father and Protector of all; She is the Son and the Creator; by Her grace She saves from sin the souls of those who worship Her. She gives unto Her children everything that is worth giving. She dwells in the forms of all *devas* or bright spirits; She is all that is born and all that will be born. She is all in all.' (Rig Veda, Book 2, ch. vi, verse 17.)

Thus, we see that in ancient India God was conceived as both the Father and the Mother of the universe centuries before Jesus was born. In Greece, however, the idea of the fatherhood of Zeus-pitar prevailed, but his motherly aspect was denied, because Zeus-pitar or Jupiter was only an extra-cosmic personal God. As long as the conception of God is extra-cosmic, or as dwelling outside of nature, He appears to His

worshippers as father alone and as masculine. The God of Jesus the Christ was the same extra-cosmic creator who was called Yahveh or Jehovah in Judaism and who was always described as masculine.

According to the Hebrews, the masculine element of nature possessed all activity, strength, and power; the male principle was recognized as the generator, and the female principle of nature was thought to be lower, insignificant, powerless, and passive. The female principle of nature was the producer and bearer of what the male principle created; consequently, everything that represented the female principle was considered as unimportant. This explains why womanhood was estimated so low by the writers of the Old and New Testaments, especially by the great apostle to the Gentiles. Even the very appearance and existence of woman on earth depended upon a man's rib, according to the Genesis. Although the Creator was represented by the Hebrews as masculine and all-powerful, when they explained the Genesis of the world, they could not deny the presence of the feminine element, which helped the Creator in bringing life into existence. In the Mosaic account of Genesis we read, 'And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters' (Gen. i, 2), which literally means that the Creator impregnated the waters or the female element of nature. And, as God, that is, the male element, was extra-cosmic, outside of nature, and possessed all activity and power. He became the object of worship; and the female element or nature was entirely ignored. Every Christian admits the existence of nature, the female principle; but she has never been worshipped or adored. The idea of fatherhood grew stronger and stronger and the mother nature was left aside as passive and powerless, and was ultimately ignored. As long as the conception of God remains as extra-cosmic, separate from nature which is passive, so long will He appear as Father alone. The more we comprehend God immanent and resident in nature, the more clearly we understand that God is our Mother as well as our Father. When we see that nature or the feminine principle is inseparable from the supreme Being or the masculine element, when we realize that nature is not passive and powerless, but the divine Energy, then we understand that God is one stupendous Whole, in whom exist

both the masculine and feminine principles. Then we no longer separate nature from God, but we recognize nature as a part of the manifested divine Energy.

So long as God is supposed to dwell outside of nature and as father alone, He remains as the efficient cause of the universe, while nature appears to be the material cause. But, when we realize that nature or the material cause is nothing but a part of the manifested divine Energy, we then understand that God does not, like a carpenter or a potter, create or fashion the phenomena out of the materials which exist outside of Himself, but that He projects by the process of evolution everything out of His own body, wherein dwell all matter and forces of the world. In no other scriptures than the Vedas, in no other religion than that of the Vedanta, is the personal God described as the Father and the Mother, the efficient and the material cause of the universe. Nowadays liberal-minded Christians are trying to introduce the idea that God is both Father and Mother of the universe; but they do not realize that by so doing they are entirely upsetting the Christian conception of God, who dwells outside of nature and of the universe. The God of Christianity can never become both Father and Mother at the same time. If we address Him as the Mother of the universe, we have outgrown that conception of God which is taught in the Bible and in Christian theology. In the whole Scriptures of the Christians, there is not one passage, where Jehovah is addressed as the Mother. In Isaiah (ch. lxvi, 13) the Lord says: 'As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you.' From this passage, however, no fair-minded person can deduce that Jehovah was the Mother of the universe.

The Vedantic idea that God is the Mother as well as the Father of all, harmonizes with the modern scientific conception of God. Modern science traces the whole phenomenal universe back to the state of eternal energy. The doctrine of evolution, correlation of forces, persistence of energy, all these clearly prove that the phenomena of the whole universe and the various forces of the external and internal world are but the expressions of one eternal Energy. The theory of evolution explains only the mode in which that eternal Energy produces this phenomenal universe. Science has disproved the old theory of crea-

tion out of nothing, through the fiat of an extra-cosmic God, and has shown that something can never come out of nothing. Science teaches that the universe existed in a potential state in that energy, and gradually, through the process of evolution, the whole potentiality has become kinetic or actual. That eternal Energy is not an unintelligent energy, but is intelligent. Wherever we cast our eyes, either in the external or internal world, we find the expression, not of a fortuitous or accidental combination of matter and mechanical forces, but of regular laws guided by definite purpose. This universe is not a chaos but a cosmos, one harmonious whole. It is not an aimless chain of changes which we call evolution, but there is an orderly hidden purpose at every step of evolution. Therefore, that energy is intelligent. We may call this self-existing, intelligent, eternal cosmic energy the Mother of the universe. She is the source of infinite forces and infinite phenomena. This eternal energy is called in Sanskrit *Prakriti* (*Latin, procreatrix*), the creative power of the universe.

'Thou art the *Para-Prakriti* or the divine energy of the supreme Being. Of Thee is born everything of the universe; therefore, Thou art the Mother of the universe.' As all the forces of nature are but the manifestations of this divine Energy, She is called all-powerful. Wherever there is the expression of any force or power in the universe, there is the manifestation of the eternal *Prakriti* or the divine Mother. It is more appropriate to call that Energy mother than father, because like a mother, that Energy holds within her the germ of the phenomenal universe before evolution, develops, and sustains it, projects it on space and preserves it when it is born. She is the Mother of the Trinity,—Creator, Preserver, and Destroyer. She is the source of all activity. She is the *Shakti*, force in action. A creator, when deprived of his creative power, is one of the expressions of that eternal Energy, the Creator or Brahma is looked upon by the Hindus as the child of the universal divine Mother, so, too, is the Preserver Vishnu and the Destroyer Shiva. The Hindus have understood this eternal Energy as the Mother of the universe and have worshipped Her from the prehistoric times of the Vedic period. Here we should remember that this divine Energy is not the same as the powerless and passive nature, which was rejected and ignored by the

Jews and the Christians. We must not mistake this worship of the Divine Mother for Nature-worship. In the Rig Veda, we read: 'The Mother Divine says, 'I am the Queen of the universe, the giver of all wealth and fruits of works. I am intelligent and omniscient. Although I am one, by My powers I appear as manifold. I cause war for protecting men, I kill the enemy and bring peace on earth, I stretch out heaven and earth. I have produced the Father. As the wind blows by itself, so I produce all phenomena by My own will. I am independent and responsible to none. I am beyond the sky, beyond this earth. My glory is the phenomenal universe; such am I by My power."[2]

Thus the divine Mother is described as all in all. We live and move and have our existence in that divine Mother. Who can live for a moment, if that external Energy cease to manifest? All our mental and physical activity depends on Her. She is doing whatever She chooses to do. She is independent. She obeys none. She is the producer of every event that occurs in the universe. She makes one appear good, spiritual, and divine, while it is She who makes another appear as wicked and sinful; since it is through Her power that one performs virtuous deeds or commits sinful acts. But She is beyond good and evil, beyond virtue and vice. Her forces are neither good nor evil, although they appear so to us, when we look at them from different standpoints and compare them with one another.

When that all-pervading divine energy manifests, it expresses itself in two sets of opposite forces. The one set has the tendency towards God and is called *vidya* in Sanskrit. The other tends towards worldliness and is called *avidya*. The one leads to freedom and happiness, and the other to bondage and suffering. The one is knowledge, the other is ignorance. The one is light, the other is darkness. Each individual soul is a centre where these opposite forces are constantly working and fighting with one another. When *vidya* or the powers which lead Godward predominate, we advance towards God and become religious, spiritual and unselfish; but when its opposite, the *avidya* power prevails, we become worldly, selfish, and

[2] Rig Veda, x, *hymn* 125.

wicked. When the former is predominant the latter is overcome, and *vice versa*. These powers exist in each individual, though they vary in the degree of intensity in each. The man or woman, in whom the former, that is, the Godward-leading powers prevail, is called devotional, prayerful, righteous, pure in heart, unselfish. These qualities are but expressions of the *vidya* powers within us. Such higher powers are latent in all, even in those who do not show virtuous qualities. All persons can rouse those latent spiritual forces by practising devotion, prayer, righteousness, purity, unselfishness. The easiest way to attain them is by the worship of the *vidya-shakti*, or that aspect of the divine Mother or divine Energy which represents all the powers that lead to spiritual perfection.

By worship or devotion is meant constant remembrance of that aspect. If we constantly think of the source of all spirituality and of all the higher powers which make one spiritual, surely those powers will be aroused in us, and we shall become spiritual, righteous, and unselfish. Therefore the Hindus worship this *vidya-shakti*. When they worship that aspect, they do not, however, deny, or ignore its opposite nature which leads to worldliness, but they make it subordinate to the higher *vidya* aspect. Sometimes they think of these opposite forces separately, personify them, and make them the female attendants of the divine Mother. The divine Mother has many attendants. All the evil forces of nature are Her attendants. She stands in the centre of the universe radiant in Her own glory, like the sun, when surrounded on all sides by thick, dark clouds.

Wherever there is any expression of extraordinary righteousness and spirituality, it is a special manifestation of the divine Mother, there is Her incarnation. The divine Mother incarnates sometimes in the form of a man, and sometimes in the form of a woman, to establish order and righteousness. All men and women are Her children. But there is something more in the woman. As the woman represents motherhood on earth, so all women, whether married or unmarried, are representative of that almighty divine Mother of the universe. It is for this reason that women are so highly revered and honoured by the Hindus. There is no country in the world, except India. where God, the supreme Being, has been wor-

shipped from time immemorial as the divine Mother of the universe. India is the only country, where the earthly mother is looked upon as the living deity, and where a man learns in his childhood, 'One mother is greater than a thousand fathers.'

You have heard many stories regarding the condition of women in India. Most of these, however, are grossly exaggerated, some are utterly false, and some are partially true. The familiar American story of Hindu mothers throwing their babes into the Ganges to become food for crocodiles, is unknown among the Hindus. In the first place, crocodiles cannot live in a strong current like that of the Ganges. I have travelled the length of this mighty river from its mouth to its source, some fifteen hundred miles, but never found a single instance of such an inhuman act. Hindu mothers, like their Christian sisters, may sometimes destroy their children, but such action is as strongly condemned in India as in America. These statements were heard by me for the first time after coming to America, though tales and pictures to this effect have been quite common in this country in books for the young. There is no other country, 'where every living mother'—as Sir Monier Monier Williams says—'is venerated as a kind of deity by her children, where every village or city has its special guardian mother, called (in Sanskrit) *mata*.'[3]

It is extremely difficult for a Western mind to grasp exactly what the Hindus mean, when they say that every woman is a representative of the divine Mother. A very simple illustration will give you an idea of the respect the Hindus have for women. In Sanskrit, when two names are used together, the rule of grammar is that the more honourable should stand first. In Sanskrit we say, women and men, not men and women ; instead of father and mother, we say mother and father ; instead of husband and wife, wife and husband, because a woman is always more honourable than a man. In India wives do not adopt their husbands' names, they do not merge their individuality into that of their husbands, as women do in the West, but they keep their own names separate. If a wife's name be Radha, and her husband's name be Krishna, and, if we say them

[3] Cf. *Hinduism and Brahmanism*, p. 222.

together, we would say Radha-Krishna and never Krishna-Radha. The wife's name must be said first. So we say, Sita-Rama; Sita is the wife and Rama is the husband. Again, when God incarnates in a man form, as in Krishna or Rama, the wife of such an incarnation will be worshipped as the incarnation of the Mother. The wife will be worshipped first and then the husband. A Western mind does not easily appreciate the wonderful reverence for womanhood which the Hindus have.

The divine Mother is the personal God, the same as Isvara in Sanskrit; and Brahman or the absolute Substance or the universal Spirit is the impersonal Being. Brahman is formless, nameless, and without any attributes. It is the ocean of absolute intelligence, existence, and bliss. It has no activity. It is the 'Godhead' of Fichte, the 'Substantia' of Spinoza. It transcends all phenomena. Before phenomenal manifestation, divine Energy rested on the bosom of that ocean of absolute Being in a potential state. It is the dormant state of activity somewhat like our deep sleep state, when all activity is latent. As in deep sleep all the mental and physical powers exist in us in an unmanifested condition and nothing is lost, so, before the beginning of the cosmic evolution, all the phenomenal forces of the universe remained dormant in that Energy. There were no phenomena, no manifestation of any powers whatever. Again, as in our waking state, all the latent powers manifest and we are able to walk, move, talk, and are tremendously active, so, when a portion of that impersonal Being wakes up, as it were, and manifests the latent cosmic powers of the sleeping Energy, the evolution of the cosmic Energy begins and the impersonal Being appears as the Creator of the universe and its Preserver.

The impersonal Being is, then, called personal, on account of that manifested energy. According to the Hindus, the impersonal Brahman is neither masculine nor feminine. But the personal God is masculine and feminine both in one. Energy and Being are inseparable in the personal God. As pure Being without energy cannot produce any phenomena and as Energy possesses all activity and is the mother of all forces and phenomena, the personal God is most appropriately called the Mother of the universe. As fire and its burning power or heat are

inseparable, so Being and Energy are inseparable and one. Those, who worship the masculine aspect of God, in reality worship the male child born of that divine Mother. Because the activity, strength, and power which make one masculine, owe their origin to that divine Energy. But those, who worship the divine Mother, worship the Whole—all gods, all angels, and all spirits that exist in the universe.

The wonderful effect of this conception of the Motherhood of God is to be found in the daily life of almost every Hindu woman and man. A Hindu woman thinks that she is a part of the divine Mother, nay, one with Her. She looks upon all men and women of the world as her own children. She thinks of herself as the blessed Mother of the world. How can such a woman be unkind to anybody? Her pure motherly love flows towards all men and women equally. There is no room for any impure thought or feeling or passion in such a heart. That perfect motherly feeling makes her ultimately live like the divine Mother on earth. Her ideal God in human form is her own child. She worships the incarnation of God as her most beloved child. Just as Mary was the mother of Jesus, so the Hindu women in India often look upon themselves as the mother of Krishna, the Hindu Christ, or of Rama, another incarnation. Christian mothers, perhaps, will be able to appreciate this to a certain extent. If a Christian mother thinks that she is Christ's mother and loves Him as she loves her own child, the effect will be wonderful. She will, then, understand what divine Motherhood is. The Hindus think this the easiest way for women to attain to that love which makes them unselfish and divine. A mother can sacrifice everything for her child; she naturally loves the child without seeking any return, though there are mothers who do not possess pure, unselfish motherly love. A true mother, however, loves her child above everything. If such a child be an incarnation of God Himself, how easy it will be for the mother to attain to the highest goal of religion. I know a lady[4] in India who became a widow when she was young. She did not marry again. She was not like the ordinary woman of the world, who thinks that a husband is essential to her happiness and that marriage is the

[4] She was known as *Gopaler Ma* or mother of boy Krishna.

highest ideal of life. She lived the pure life of a nun and worshipped Krishna as her own child. She became so advanced in spirituality that now hundreds of educated men and women of high rank in Calcutta come to see her, to receive spiritual instruction from her. They kiss the dust of her feet, as devout Roman Catholics kiss the feet of the statue of Mary, they revere her and call her the Mother of God, Mother of Krishna, the Shepherd. She is still living near Calcutta. She feels in herself the presence of the blessed Mother of the universe.

Another wonderful result of this conception of God as the Mother of the universe, is that, when a man worships God as his mother, he always thinks of himself as a child in its mother's arms. As a child does not fear anything, when it is near its mother, so the worshipper of the divine Mother is never afraid of anything. He sees the blessed Mother everywhere. In every woman he sees the manifestation of his eternal Mother. Consequently, every woman on earth is his mother. He conquers all lust and sense-desires. He sees woman in a different light. He worships every woman mentally.

I have seen a man who lived on this earth like a living child of the divine Mother, always protected and taken care of by Her. He worshipped God as the Mother of the universe. Through that worship he became pure, righteous, and spiritual. He used to say, 'O, my Mother, Thou art all in all. Thou art my Guide, my Leader, and Strength.' His divine Mother showed him the true nature of man and woman. He bowed down before all women, young, mature, and old, and said to them, 'You are the living representatives of my divine Mother on earth.' How can a child have any other relation to one who is the same as its real mother? By this kind of devotion he conquered all lust and worldliness. His childlike, whole-souled, and rapturous self-consecration to the divine Mother is a landmark in the religious history of India. His whole life, which was the personification of purity, self-control, self-resignation, and filial love to the divine Mother, stands as a mighty testimony to the reality and effectiveness of the worship of God as the Mother of the universe. When he sang the praises of the divine Mother, he gave life to every word he uttered, and no soul could hear him without being moved to tears by deep devotional feelings, without realizing that this

wonderful child was in direct communion with his divine Mother. His divine Mother showed him that each woman was Her incarnation, so he worshipped and honoured all women as a son might worship his own mother. Some Western people may laugh at such reverence, but a Hindu is extremely proud of it. He knows how to honour a woman. Professor Max Muller was much impressed with the wonderful life of this great sage, and has recently published his life and sayings.[5] He was once asked: 'If we are the children of your divine Mother, why does She not take care of us? Why does She not come to us and take us up in Her arms?' The sage replied: 'A mother has several children. To one she has given a doll, to another some candy, to the third a music box, according as each one likes. Thus, when they begin to play and are absorbed, they forget their mother; she, in the meanwhile, looks after her household work. But the moment any one of them gets tired of the play, and, throwing aside the playing, cries for the mother, 'Mamma, mamma dear!' she runs quickly to him, takes him up in her arms, kisses him often and often and caresses him. So, oh man! being absorbed with the playthings of the world, you have forgotten your divine Mother; when you get tired of your play, and, throwing aside the toys, you cry for Her sincerely and with the simplicity of a child, She will come at once and take you up in Her arms. Now you want to play and She has given you all that you need at present.' Each one of us will see the divine Mother sooner or later. The Mother is always taking care of us and protecting us, whether we feel it or not, whether we realize it or not.

The Vedanta philosophy recognizes both the Fatherhood and Motherhood of the personal God and teaches us that, through the worship of either of these aspects, the highest ideal of religion can be reached. The Prajapati or the Lord of all creatures of the Vedas is called 'Isvara' in Vedanta. Some worship Him as the Father, while others call Him divine Mother. But He is sexless and therefore both Father and Mother of all. Those who address Him as the Father say:

'O Lord, Thou art the Father of the universe, of all animate and inanimate objects. Thou art worshipped by all.

[5] *'Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna,'* by F. Max Muller. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.

Thou art greater than the greatest; O Thou of incomparable power, none in the heavens and earth is equal to Thee, how can any one be greater? O Lord, as a father forgiveth his son, a friend his dear friend, a lover his beloved, even so do Thou forgive me.'

Those who worship His motherly aspect pray to Her, saying:

'O Mother Divine, Thou art the eternal energy, the infinite source of the universe. Thy powers manifest in the infinite variety of names and forms. Being deluded by the power of ignorance, we forget Thee and take pleasure in the playthings of the world. But, when we come to Thee, take Thy refuge and worship Thee, Thou makest us free from ignorance and worldliness, and givest us eternal happiness by keeping us, Thine own children, on Thy bosom.'

CHAPTER V

THE RELATION OF SOUL TO GOD

The soul enchained is "man", and free from chain is "God."—
Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna, by Max Muller, p. 145.

A clear understanding of man's relation to God is a matter of momentous importance to students of philosophy and religion, and to all seekers of Truth. From very ancient times all the best thinkers, prophets, and the great religious leaders of the world, whether of the East or of the West, have endeavoured to explain our relation to God and to the universe. Out of those explanations have arisen various schools of philosophy and different systems of religious beliefs among the different nations of the world.

Every philosophy and every religion, ancient or modern, has arrived at certain conclusions in its attempt to describe the relation which each individual bears to God. All such conclusions, of course, presuppose the existence of God, an depend upon the nature of our conception of God as well as of the human soul. Those, who deny the existence of God and hold that we are but mere accidental appearances in the mechanical process of the blind forces of nature, which are acting aimlessly upon dead matter, think that it is loss of time and waste of energy to discuss such useless and absurd topics. They would rather devote their energy in obtaining the best things of the Godless world for the comforts of the soulless body. They do not believe in the existence of any such thing as soul, mind, or spirit apart from the functions of the body. When the body dies everything comes to an end. As with the body, so it is with the material universe.

Such thinkers are not the products of the twentieth century alone, but they are as old as the appearance of man upon earth. In ancient India, this class of thinkers existed side by side with the believers in the individual soul of man and in God, as numerously as we find them today among the most cultivated minds of the West. Those ancient materialists, like

the modern agnostics and atheists, making sense perception the standard of their knowledge of things, denied the existence of that which they could not perceive by their senses. But the other class of thinkers, who went below the surface of sense perceptions into the realm of the invisible, weighed these materialistic arguments, pointed out their fallacies, and ultimately established through logical and scientific reasoning, the existence of the individual soul of man as well as of the soul of the universe, or God, and described their mutual relation.

These thinkers can be divided into three classes: First, the dualists; secondly, the qualified non-dualists; and thirdly, the non-dualists, or monists. The Western dualists believe in an extra-cosmic personal God, who creates the universe out of nothing, fashions it, gives names to the phenomena, and afterwards governs it. According to them, God, the Creator and Governor of the universe, is eternally separate from the world and from all living creatures, just as a potter is separate from the pot which he makes or as carpenter who stands always outside of the table or chair which he makes. The dualists believe in a God who has human attributes infinitely magnified. He is all-wise, merciful, just, and all-powerful. Some of the dualists go so far as to give human form to God, as we find in the conception of Jehovah among the Hebrews and the orthodox Christians. In the Old Testament, Jehovah is described as walking with Adam in the Garden of Eden. It is said: 'And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden' (Genesis iii, 8). Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel saw Him. The nobles not only saw, but they did eat and drink with Him. (Exodus, xxiv, 9, 11.) Moses saw Jehovah's back. Jehovah ate with Abraham under the oaks at Mamre (Genesis, xviii, 1, 8.). God was pleased with the sweet savour of Noah's sacrifice. He possesed human appetites. He walked with Noah.

The same Jehovah with a human form and human qualities and with a human personality is the ideal God of the orthodox Christian monotheists of today. They believe in Jehovah as sitting on a throne somewhere in the heavens, with eyes red with anger and revenge, and holding a rod, ever

ready to punish the wicked with eternal fire. From many of the orthodox pupils the same God is preached to-day, as He was in the days of the past. The relation of man to such a personal, or rather human God with human attributes, is like that of a creature to his creator, of a subject to his king, or of a slave to his master. As the duty of a subject is to obey implicitly the commands of his king, or ruler, or governor, so every man's duty is to obey the commands of the Governor of the universe, otherwise he will be punished. Similar relation of man to the extra-cosmic personal Ruler of the universe is to be found in most of the dualistic or monotheistic religions of the world. All the religions of Europe and Asia, which are dualistic or monotheistic, teach that our relation to God is that of a creature to his creator, or of the governed to the governor.

Although man is said to be created in God's image in Genesis, yet it is generally understood that he cannot have any relation higher than that of a creature to his creator. It simply means that the first man, being the image of God, possessed at first some of the divine qualities before he was tempted by Satan. Although the Christians believe that Jesus the Christ was the Son of God, and that God is the Father of the universe, yet according to them, an ordinary mortal cannot be called the son of God in the same sense as Jesus of Nazareth was, because he was an exception to the general rule. Whether Jesus ever meant that he was the only begotten Son of God exclusive of any other mortal, is a problem yet to be solved. If every individual be a true image or the son of God, then the question arises, why should He punish His own son so mercilessly with eternal fire, as is described in the parable of the marriage of the king s son: 'Then said the king to the servants; Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen.' (Matt. xxii, 13, 14.) Again, in saying: '*Ye* serpents, *ye* generation of vipers, how can *ye* escape the damnation of hell?' (Matt. xxiii, 33.) Thus, according to popular Christianity, as it is understood and preached in the orthodox churches, man's relation to God is not like that of His image, nor like that of a son to his loving father, but like that of a subject to his despotic monarch, Christ being the only begotten son of God. The Christians

believe that God creates the soul out of nothing and implants it in the human form at the time of its birth. As long as there is preached the idea of the creation of the universe and of man out of nothing by an extra-cosmic personal God with human attributes, so long will our relation to God remain like that of a creature to his creator or of the governed to his governor.

In India too there are dualists. They believe in an extra-mundane personal God who is the repository of all blessed qualities, who is omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving, who creates the universe, not out of nothing, but out of the material of nature which is eternal. God is the efficient cause of the universe, and nature is the material cause. They do not believe that the human soul comes into existence all of a sudden and has a beginning, as the Christians do, but that it existed in the past and will exist in future from eternity to eternity. They say that, as nature is eternal, so are the individual souls. Each soul after remaining potentially in nature for some time, comes out of the causal state at the beginning of a new cycle of creation or evolution, and manifests in gross forms, one after another, going through the different grades of evolution according to its desires and tendencies, until it reaches perfection. After reading the New Testament, one cannot get any definite conception of the nature of the human soul, nor of its destiny. but, in the dualistic system of India, one learns that the human soul is like an infinitesimal particle of nature, containing the divine light of intelligence and divine power in an infinitely small degree, whose duty is to serve God through prayers, good deeds, good thoughts, and love. God loves all, and He can be loved in return. Those, who worship Him through unswerving devotion and unselfish love, obtain freedom from the dark side of nature, that is, from the bondages of ignorance, selfishness, suffering, misery, and all other imperfections; and after death they live a life of bliss and perfection forever in the presence of the eternal personal God. This is salvation according to the dualists in India. They do not mean by salvation going to heaven, but on the contrary, hold that heaven is a realm, where one goes to enjoy the results of one's good deeds, and at the end of such a period of celestial enjoyment, one comes back to earth and is born again.

Each soul is bound to attain this salvation, sooner or later. Those who do wicked deeds, reap the results of their actions and thoughts, not by going to any place of eternal fire and punishment, but by being born again and again until they reach the state of spirituality, devotion, and righteousness. The monotheists in India do not believe that God punishes any one, as He is the embodiment of divine love. Nor do they believe in eternal suffering, nor in any Satan or creator of evil. But they do believe in a temporary suffering of the wicked, which is the reaction of their own wicked acts. They do not blame God or charge Him with partiality, they do not blame Satan, but they take upon their own shoulders the whole burden of responsibility. These dualists believe that, wherever there is life, there is the manifestation of the divine light of intelligence, however small it may be, however imperfect the expression of intelligence may be. From the minutest insect up to the highest gods (*devas*) or angels, or bright spirits, each individual life is filled with a ray of that divine Sun. They sometimes compare God with a gigantic magnet and the individual soul with the point of a needle, and say, as a magnet attracts a needle, so the great God attracts the individual souls towards Him through love, and magnetizes them, as it were, by His divine grace and power. Although they believe that each soul is separate from God and from other souls, yet its relation to God is like that of a ray to the sun or of a spark to fire. Their conception of the human soul is with attributes, with qualities and character, with mind, intellect, sense-powers, and the finer particles of ethereal matter which give foundation to grosser physical forms. In short, it is the same as the individual ego, as we call it, or the spiritual body, as it is called in the New Testament. According to these dualists, God can be worshipped by man through various relations, such as by calling Him master, or father, or mother, or brother, or friend, or son, or husband. These relations depend upon the nature and characteristics of the worshipper. Some like to think of themselves as servants of God, others as friends, or brothers, or sons. They say, as the same man in a household can be the master in relation to his servants, the father in relation to his children, a friend, a brother, or a husband in relation to his wife, so the same God can appear in all those various relations to different devotees

according to their modes of thinking. Such is the conception of the individual soul and its relation to God according to the dualistic thinkers of India.

Next to the dualistic conception of God comes that of the qualified non-dualists. These thinkers go a little deeper than the dualists. Starting from the dualistic standpoint, they go a step further towards the realization of Truth and of man's relation to God. According to them, God is no longer extra-cosmic, no more outside of and separate from the universe, but He is intra-cosmic. He is no longer governor from the outside, but *Antaryamin,* inter-ruler. He is immanent and resident in nature. He interpenetrates every particle of the universe. The physical universe is His gross physical body. He has infinite eyes, infinite ears, and infinite organs of other senses. He sees through the eyes of all living creatures of the universe. He hears through all the ears that exist in the universe. He has infinite heads. The wind is His breath. His mind is the sum total of individual minds, or in other words, the cosmic mind. His intellect is the cosmic intellect. His soul is the cosmic ego, or the soul of the universe. He is no longer the creator of the universe, or one who fashions the materials of nature and gives names and forms to the phenomena from outside like a potter or a carpenter. He is not the efficient cause alone, as the dualists maintain, but He is both efficient and material cause of the universe. He creates, that is, He projects into the physical space the phenomenal forms out of nature or divine energy which is in His body. He is the one living Being in the universe. He is the one stupendous Whole, and we are but parts.

In that process of projection or evolution of nature, infinite numbers of individual souls, which existed in His body from the beginningless past, come out on the physical plane, take forms, play their parts according to their desires, and fulfil the purpose of life by going through the process of evolution. Each individual soul is like a spark which emanates from the huge bonfire of God, and lives in and through God, but it cannot be called God. God dwells everywhere. He pervades the universe and nature, and yet He transcends them both. He is infinite but personal, without any human form. The qualified non-dualists say that God cannot be confined to any form, because every form is a limitation in space by time, while God

is unlimited by space or time. He is beyond space and time. Still, He can appear in various forms to satisfy the desires of His worshippers. Our body is a part of God's body, our mind is a part of the divine or universal mind, our will is a part of the universal or cosmic will. This is called the qualified non-dualistic conception of God, because it looks at unity as qualified by variety. That is, God is one, the universe and human souls are one in God, yet each retains its own separate individuality. God is like a tree and we are like branches thereof. It reminds me of the simile of the vine and its branches which Jesus the Christ gave to show man's relation to God. The same idea underlies His saying, 'My Father is greater than I.' According to this class of thinkers, the individual soul possesses all the qualities of the human ego. As our ego has mind, intellect, sense-power, memory, and is limited by other egoes, so is the soul. After the death of the body, the soul contracts its qualities within itself, and, at the time of its birth, it expands those latent powers. Our ego or soul is a part of the cosmic ego, or the soul of the universe, or God.

Next to these, comes the class of monistic or non-dualistic thinkers. They do not stop where the qualified non-dualists have stopped, but they push their investigations still further, and analyse the nature of the individual soul or ego, and ultimately discover the unchangeable essence of the ego. They are the seekers of the unchangeable reality of the universe. In their search, they will not stop until they have reached that Truth which is immutable, eternal, and one. They adopt the scientific methods of analysis, observation, and experiment, and apply them to solve the subtlest and most abstract problems. Analysing the nature of the ego, they find that, it cannot be the unchangeable reality or immutable truth, because the mind, with its various modifications, such as intellect, memory, etc., is constantly changing. After patient research and continuous struggle to know the ultimate Truth, these great monistic sages realized that the ego, or the individual soul, is nothing but a changeful receptacle of a still subtler substance, which is unchangeable and eternal. They called it the *Atman* in Sanskrit.

There is no word in the English language, which conveys the meaning of this *Atman*. It is much finer than ego or the living soul of the individual. Atman is the unconditioned

reality in man; and the living soul or the individual ego is the subtle covering of the *Atman,* like the globe that covers the light of a lamp. That *Atman* is not a part of the universal ego, but it is one with the unconditioned Reality of the universe, which is called in Sanskrit Brahman, or the all-pervading Spirit, or the Absolute. Sometimes, it is called Paramatman, which was translated by Ralph Waldo Emerson as Over-Soul. It is finer than the cosmic Ego or God. It is sexless, neither masculine nor feminine. It is sometimes translated by the Oriental scholars as the 'Self'. But Self is a confusing word. Some people mistake it for the Anglo-Saxon self, which acts and progresses, and which is another name for the ego.

According to the non-dualistic conception of the true nature of man, the *Atman* or the Self, or the spiritual essence of man, is the same as the Brahman, the spiritual or divine Essence of the universe. The relation of the true nature of man to God is no longer like that of a creature to creator, nor like that of a son to his father, nor like that of a part to the whole, but it is absolute Oneness on the highest spiritual plane. The *Atman,* or the divine nature of man, is the same as the absolute Divinity of the cosmos. On that highest spiritual plane there is no distinction, no idea of separation, no idea of creation. All ideas of separateness, all differentiations of phenomenal names and forms, merge into the absolute ocean of Reality which is unchangeable, eternal, and one. The essence of the Creator is infinite, and it interpenetrates the phenomenal forms as the external space pervades every particle of atoms of the phenomenal world. That essence is like the all-pervading background of the phenomenal appearances. Phenomena are like the waves in the ocean of infinite Reality. Individual souls are like so many bubbles in that ocean of absolute Existence. As a bubble rises on the surface of the ocean, takes a form, lives there, comes near other bubbles, lives in a group for some time, moves in the company of others, changes its size, perhaps, and goes down again; so the individual soul rises in that ocean of infinite existence, appears in various forms, passes through the different stages of evolution, and lives there forever and ever, sometimes as manifested and at other times as unmanifested. The light of intelligence in the soul or ego is due to the reflection of the *Atman* or divine Spirit on the mirror of

the heart of the ego or soul. Therefore the soul is called the image or reflection of the *Atman* or divine Spirit.

This idea is beautifully expressed in one of the Upanishads: 'In the cave of our heart have entered the two—the *Atman* or the divine Spirit, and the individual ego or soul. Dwelling on the highest summit, or the ether of the heart, the one witnesses the other, while the soul drinks the rewards of its own works. The wise men and sages describe the one as the light, and the other as the reflection, image, or shadow.' (*Katha Upanishad*, ch. iii, verse 1.) You will notice here what a deep meaning lies at the back of the expression, 'Man is the image of God.' The ancient sages used the same expression in a sense, which many of the best philosophers of the Western world failed to grasp or comprehend. Thus, the most ancient monistic sages explained the highest relation of the individual soul to *Atman* or divine Spirit, by calling it the reflection or image of the self-effulgent light of God. But, as a reflection cannot exist independent of the light whose reflection it is, so the soul of man cannot exist independent of *Atman*. Therefore, the true nature of the soul is *Atman*, the divine and real Spirit which cannot be divided into part and is one absolute source of existence, intelligence, and bliss. Such is the monistic or non-dualistic explanation of the relation of the soul to God.

Vedanta philosophy recognizes these three explanations. It says that the relation of the soul to God varies as the conception of the individual soul and of God becomes finer and higher. Starting from the gross form of body, when a real and earnest seeker after Truth marches onward toward the Absolute, he passes through all the intermediate stages, until he reaches that state of divine communion, where he realizes the oneness of the *Atman*, or the true nature of man with Brahman, the cosmic divine Essence, or the absolute Reality of the universe. Then, he declares, I am Brahman, I am He, I am in the sun, in the moon, in stars ; I am one with the all-pervading Reality ; or as Jesus the Christ said, 'I and my Father are one.' He does not use the word 'I' in its ordinary sense of ego or human personality, but in the sense of *Atman*, or divine Essence. Jesus was dualist, when He prayed to His Father in heaven, and he was a monist, when He said, 'I and my Father are one', 'The kingdom of heaven is within you.' A Vedanta philosopher

or sage, after realizing that absolute Oneness on the highest spiritual plane of the *Atman,* says, when he returns to the plane of relativity and phenomena:

'O Lord, when I think of my body, I am Thy servant and Thou art my Master; when I look at my soul, I am Thy part and Thou art the one stupendous Whole; but when I realize my true nature, I am divine and one with Thee, the absolute Spirit. Such is my conception of my relation to Thee.'

CHAPTER VI

WHAT IS AN INCARNATION OF GOD

The Lord says: "Whenever religion declines and irreligion prevails, I manifest myself to protect the righteous, to destroy evil, and to establish true religion".—Bhagavad Gita, IV, 7, 8.

Two great religions of the world advocate the belief that God, the supreme Ruler of the universe, incarnates in human form to help mankind—the one is Christianity, the other is the religion of Vedanta, which prevails in India.

Christianity, believing in the existence of one personal God who is the Creator, Governor, and Father of the universe, teaches that this heavenly Father incarnated Himself in human form as Jesus the Christ to show His love, His mercy and kindness for His suffering children as well as to save the world from eternal perdition. It may be interesting to many to know how this doctrine of divine incarnation, unknown to the earliest Christians of the first century after Christ, gradually grew and developed into its present form. Readers of ecclesiastical history are well aware of the fact that no problem troubled the minds of the founders of the Christian Church and of Christian theology so much as this one of the divine incarnation of Jesus the Christ. During the early periods of Church history, indeed, no other question was considered to be of such vital importance as that of the heavenly Father's incarnation in the form of Jesus of Nazareth. Although, for many of the uneducated masses, this problem appears to have been satisfactorily solved by the wonderfully subtle and apparently logical arguments of certain priests and theologians, still it is not unknown to the educated classes that the acceptance of their solution depended largely upon priestly power, upon anathema, and upon the persecution of those who refused to receive these arguments as the only correct solution of the problem.

Let us go back for a moment to that time, when Constantine the Great settled the disputes of the bishops regarding the incarnation of the supreme Being in the form of the Son of

Man. In the first place, we should remember that the modern Christian idea of divine incarnation is founded upon the belief in the Trinitarian doctrine of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in the memorable text of the First Epistle of John: 'For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one' (ch. v. 7). Before the doctrine of the divine incarnation of Jesus the Christ was established and accepted by the Church, the early Christians believed in the Trinity and constantly discussed the most subtle and profound questions concerning the nature, generation, distinction, and qualities of the three divine persons of the mysterious triad. At that time, the majority of Christian thinkers believed in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God, but they did not dare declare that he was 'God himself in human form', the second principle of the blessed Trinity. It was Justin Martyr, a Christian convert of the Platonic school and a believer in the Platonic doctrine of the Trinity, who, about the middle of the second century for the first time, promulgated the idea that Jesus the Christ, the Son of God, was the second person in the Triune Deity and the creator of the universe. He is the earliest writer to whom the origin of this idea can be traced, and he did not ascribe opinion to the scriptures, but to the special favour of God.

The Trinitarian controversies, which first broke out in the Christian schools of Alexandria in Egypt, the land of Trinities, took a new form during the time of Constantine the Great, the chief point of debate being to define the relation of the son to the Father. The Church of Alexandria was the most powerful of all the Churches in this period, and it was ruled by Trinitarian bishops who took part in all these discussions. One of the most prominent candidates for the office of Bishop was Arius, the celebrated originator of the Arian doctrines and a Presbyter of the Alexandrian Church. He and his followers maintained, in opposition to other bishops, that the Son of God was merely a creature or a created being, that there was a time when he did not exist. He said: 'If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning in existence; from this, it is evident that there was a time when the Son was not in being, it therefore follows that he had his existence from nothing'. This argument was the strongest of all the blows which

were given to the Trinitarian doctrine, as well as the most potent against the divinity of Jesus the Christ, because it evidently denied the co-eternity of the Father and the Son by proving the subordination of the Son to the Father, and, in consequence, inequality between them. It also indirectly implied that there was a time, when the blessed Trinity did not exist.

The question was vehemently discussed again and again in public debates by bishops and Christians, and gradually the strife spread so far that the Jews and pagans amused themselves by giving theatrical representations of the contest on the stage, the point of their burlesques being the equality of the age of the father and son. The violence of the controversy, at last, reached the point, where imperial force was needed for the decision. Emperor Constantine, being referred to, summoned the council of Nicea in A.D. 327, and settled the dispute of the bishops by formulating the famous Nicean creed and attaching to it the anathema: 'The holy Catholic and Apostolic Church anathematizes those who say that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that before he was begotten, he was not, and that he was made out of nothing or out of another substance or essence and is created or changeable or alterable.'

In this manner the socalled satisfactory solution of that most bewildering problem of the divine incarnation of Jesus was arrived at, and it was accepted, not because of the unanimous opinion of all the members of the council, but simply because the majority of the bishops were in favour of it. After this decision Arius was excommunicated for his heretical ideas, while his followers, who were quite numerous, were cruelly persecuted and their writings destroyed. Since that time, the bishops and clergy have been forced to accept the doctrine of the Trinity as also that of the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth.

Although the question of the incarnation of the omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient heavenly Father in human form was thus apparently solved by the Church and theologians, still it has not ceased to rise again and again in the thoughtful minds of different people in different countries, disturbing their peace, and frequently driving them into agnostic and atheistic beliefs. Many a soul has often cried aloud in despair: 'What Creator and Ruler of the infinite universe should be born in a

manger, should suffer from hunger and thirst, should be tempted by the devil, chastised, and scourged by ordinary mortals and forced to ignominious death upon the cross!' Devout Christians do not dare to see this absurdity or to express their opinion for fear of blasphemy and punishment; but truth-seeking, rational minds cannot rest content with mere doctrines and dogmas based upon the quicksand of the authority of some book or person.

The question presents itself: 'Is there any other way of understanding what is meant by an incarnation of God?' Outside of the Christian religion, there is one other religion or religious philosophy—that of Vedanta—which explains, through reason and logic, the problem of divine incarnation in human form upon this earth. India is the only country, where the origin of this idea can be traced back and where the belief has prevailed from prehistoric times. Long before Jesus of Nazareth was recognized as the incarnation of Divinity, the Hindus had a clear conception of this idea. Volumes upon volumes have been written in Sanskrit describing why and how the supreme Being manifests Itself in human form at different times among different nations.

One of the principal points, in which the Hindus differ from the Christians, is in maintaining that, if God incarnates or expresses His divinity in human form, His incarnation cannot be limited by time, place, or nationality. The Hindus believe that there were many incarnations before and have been many since the advent of Christ, and that all these incarnations of God are equal in greatness, majesty, wisdom and divine powers, especially in the power of saving mankind by setting forth the highest ideal of life and by leading men from the path of unrighteousness to the ultimate goal of all religions. Who could have understood and realized the highest aim and purpose of human existence, who could have solved the most bewildering questions and problems concerning the true nature and destiny of human souls, if God himself had not revealed these things to mankind from time immemorial? Could ordinary human beings with their short-sighted intellect and imperfect understanding, living constantly on the animal plane of the senses, deluded by the phantoms of phenomenal appearances and always mistaking the unreal for the real, have ever discovered the ultimate purpose of life and the true nature and destiny of human souls? Think of the innu-

merable opinions of atheists and agnostics, materialists and thinkers of different capacities, which have bewildered the intellect and understanding of the vast majority of people!

All true knowledge is but the expression of divine wisdom. All the powers that make one great, spiritual, righteous, and wise, are only the divine powers manifesting through human forms. Therefore, it is said in Vedanta: 'All that is glorious, grand, extremely righteous, or spiritual, is the outcome of the powers which proceed from the infinite source of all forces and of all energy in nature. Wherever there is anything that is extraordinary or unusually uplifting to the soul, there is a special expression of the divine power.'

According to the religion of Vedanta, the incarnation of God means the embodiment of divine qualities and divine powers. It takes place whenever and wherever such a manifestation is necessary. The blessed Lord Krishna, one of the great incarnations of Divinity, who appeared about fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, in speaking of divine incarnations, said:

'Wherever true religion declines and irreligion prevails and whenever the vast majority of mankind, forgetting the highest ideal of life, travel on the path of unrighteousness which leads to the bottomless abyss of ignorance, misery, and sorrow, the supreme Being manifests His divine powers to establish righteousness and true spirituality, by assuming a human form and living in our midst, but at the same time showing to all that He is the real master of nature and absolutely free from all the bondages of the world and its laws'.

Such embodiments may take place at any time in any country. The Hindus believe that there have been many such incarnations of Divinity in the past and that there will be many in the future. Krishna, Buddha, Jesus the Christ, Chaitanya and Ramakrishna, each one of these has been considered to be the embodiment of divine qualities and divine powers. The lives and deeds of all of them were superhuman, consequently divine. They were full of the manifestations of such powers as ordinary mortals do not possess.

A divine incarnation is one who shows from childhood that he is a born master of mind, body, and senses, and the real lord of nature, yet who never forgets even for a moment that

he has come to the world to help mankind. He is always conscious of his divine power, and he manifests divine glory through every action of his daily life. He never loses consciousness of his oneness with the eternal Truth, or the Father of the universe, the infinite source of wisdom and intelligence. He lives in the world like an embodied soul, possessing perfect peace, tranquillity, happiness, and blissfulness, without depending upon the conditions and environments which apparently bind the souls of ordinary mortals.

The difference between an ordinary human being and an incarnation of God lies in the fact that the individual soul of a common man takes birth subject to the law of *karma,* or the laws of causation and of action and reaction, in order to reap the results of the works of his previous births and to fulfil the desires that are latent in him; while a divine incarnation is the embodiment of his own free will, which alone governs him. Being absolutely free, he is not forced, by the law of *karma* or any other law, to take a human body, nor doses he wish to fulfil any of those desires that proceed from the selfish nature of ordinary mortals. His soul is not subject to the law of evolution like that of any other being. He is absolutely perfect from the very moment that he assumes human form through the inscrutable power of his own omnipotent, supreme will or *maya.* Although such an incarnation of God is beyond birth and death, he still apparently submits for the time being to the conditions of the human plane, and obeys the laws that govern that plane; yet, at the same time, he makes people realize that he is the master of nature, not its slave, and that, in reality, he does not obey its laws, but that the laws of nature obey his omnipotent will. Ordinary people, whose spiritual eyes are not open, may not see the difference that exists between his actions and those of a common mortal and may treat him like an ordinary man; but those, who are highly advanced in spirituality, who understand the true nature of the individual soul and of God and of their mutual relation, see the difference at once, recognize his divinity and worship him as the ideal embodiment of divine powers and divine qualities.

It is for this reason that the blessed Lord Krishna, the Hindu Christ, says in the Bhagavad Gita: 'People who are deluded by my mysterious power of *maya,* do not know Me as

unborn and unchanging; I am not manifest to them. They unintelligently regard Me in the light of an ordinary being with a material form which is the result of past actions, and know not that I assume at will glorious and holy forms for the protection of the world'.

The religion of Vedanta teaches that such incarnations of Divinity are not limited by distinctions of sex; they may appear in masculine or in faminine form, according to the needs of time and place. To the sexless supreme Being who is both the Father and Mother of the universe, the masculine and the feminine form are of equal value and importance. It is for this reason that amongst the Hindus in India are to be found many incarnations of Divinity in the form of woman.

The latest divine incarnation was one who appeared in the middle of the nineteenth century. He lived near Calcutta and his name was Ramakrishna. He is to-day worshipped by thousands of educated Hindus just in the same way as Jesus the Christ is adored and worshipped in Christendom. From his childhood he showed his divine power and set an example of absolute purity and divine spirituality, like an embodiment of those blessed qualities which adorned the characters of previous incarnations, such as Krishna, Buddha, or Jesus the Christ. Those who had the good fortune to see and be with him even for a short time, had their eyes open to the truth that he was absolutely superhuman. Although he had received no school education, his wisdom was vast. He was the storehouse, as it were, of unlimited knowledge, and he showed at every moment of his life that he was the absolute master of his mind, body, and senses, that he was entirely free from all the conditions that make an ordinary mortal a slave to passions and desires. He was like the personification of the Sermon on the Mount. No one could ever find the slightest flaw in his noble and divine character.[1]

At one time, he was asked: 'What is the difference between a holy sage and an incarnation of God who is called the Saviour of mankind?' He answered: 'A holy sage is one who

[1] Those who wish to know more about the life of this divine man and why he is worshipped as a Saviour of mankind, may read Swami Vivekananda's lecture on *My Master*, or *Life and Sayings of Ramakrishna*, by Prof. Max Muller.

has realized God through great pain, long prayers, and severe penances and after much trouble has saved himself from the attractions of the world, but he has not the power to save others; while a Saviour is one who can easily save hundreds without losing his own spirituality. A holy sage may be compared to a reed floating in the ocean of life, which cannot bear the weight of even a crow, but, when a Saviour descends, He easily carries thousands across the ocean like a large, powerful steamer which moves swiftly over the waters towing rafts and barges in its wake. The Saviour, like the most powerful locomotive, not only reaches the destination himself, but at the same time draws with him loads of passengers eager to go to the abode eternal of truth.'

Such is the power and strength of an incarnation of God. An ordinary person may strive and after a long struggle may attain to the realization of truth which is salvation, but with a Saviour, this is not the way; he comes to help and save others. Whosoever worships and is devoted to any of these Saviours will, through that power of devotion alone, reaches the ultimate goal of all religions. As Jesus the Christ said: 'Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest', so the other incarnations of Divinity like Ramakrishna, Buddha, and Krishna spoke to their followers, saying in the words of Krishna:

'Giving up all the formalities of religion, come unto me, take refuge in me, and I will give thee rest and make thee free from sins; grieve not, I will also give thee eternal peace and everlasting happiness.'

CHAPTER VII

SON OF GOD

The Divine Lord says: "A portion of Myself hath become the living Soul in the world of life from time without beginning."
—Bhagavad Gita, XV, 7.

It is a general belief among Christians that nearly two thousand years ago the only begotten Son of God descended upon this earth to save the souls of sinners from eternal perdition. Thoughtful people, however, may wish to enquire into the true significance of this expression 'Son of God'. Again and again are asked the questions: 'Why should Jesus the Christ alone be called the only begotten Son of God?' 'In what sense was he the son of the heavenly Father?' 'Is not every individual a child of the heavenly Father, when it is said in the fourteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, 'Ye are the children of the Lord your God'; or, when Moses said, 'Is not he thy father that hath brought thee, hath he not made thee and established thee?' (Deut. xxxii, 6). And the Hindu asks: 'Why should we not recognize the divine sonship in Krishna, Buddha, Ramakrishna, and in other Saviours of the world?'

All these and similar questions disturb the minds of those who are not satisfied with the sectarian explanations regarding the sonship of Jesus the Christ, which they have been hearing over and over again from their childhood. Of course, we have nothing to say to those whose minds are contented with such explanations, or who believe in the literal meaning of the passages descriptive of the supernatural birth and miraculous deeds of the only begotten Son of God. But, there are many who do not believe in miracles, who do not accept anything upon heresy, or, because it has been written in a certain book or been declared by a certain great personage. They wish to go to the very bottom of things, before they accept them as true; they want to know in what sense the divine sonship of the heavenly Father was understood by Jesus of Nazareth and his direct disciples.

It is extremely difficult for any one to know exactly what Jesus meant by his sonship since he has left no writings of his own. We can only gather some idea from the interpretations of his followers and from the writers of the four authentic gospels. After studying carefully the synoptic gospels, we learn that there were among the authors of these books two conceptions of the Son of God. Matthew and Luke accepted Jesus the Christ as the only begotten Son of God because of his supernatural birth, which was caused by the inscrutable power of the heavenly Father. According to these two gospels, it was a miracle; and upon this miraculous conception of Mary and the supernatural birth of Jesus depends the popular meaning of the divine sonship of Jesus the Christ. All the orthodox sects and denominations of Christianity, accepting the miracles described in Matthew and Luke as literally true, give this miraculous birth as the reason why Jesus alone should be called the only begotten Son of God. They do not recognize that other Saviours of the world, like Buddha and Krishna, had a similar supernatural birth and that their deeds were as miraculous as those of Jesus the Christ. If we ignore them, it will be quite easy for us to accept Jesus the Christ as the only begotten Son of God.

The other conception of the Son of God which we find in the fourth gospel, has a very deep philosophical significance. Before we discuss this point, let us understand clearly what conception of God the Jews had both before and after the time of Jesus the Christ. We know that the Jewish idea of God was at that time purely monotheistic. The God of Judaism was the creator and governor of the universe; He dwelt in a heaven far above mundane existence; He was so high and separate from the world, so extra-cosmic, so great, so majestic and so transcendent, that no one could approach Him, no one could live after seeing Him face to face. Consequently, there was a wide gulf of separation between God and man, between the Creator in heaven and the creature on earth. The idea of divinity in man was unknown to the Jews; such an idea would have been considered blasphemous by them. The Jews could never believe that Yahveh would stoop so low as to come down on the human plane or to live in a human form. The same spirit prevails among the Jews of today, and it has also been

inherited by the Mohammedans. According to them, God is far above man, no human being can ever represent His divinity, and there can be no other relation between man and God, between the creature and his creator, than that of a servant to the all-powerful master, or that of a subject to the most tyrannical monarch. The passages that have been quoted from the Old Testament like, 'Ye are the children of God', meant nothing more than the fatherly goodness of the Creator and the implicit obedience of the creature, as that of a dutiful son to his father. They were never meant in the sense in which the Christians understand the divine sonship of Jesus the Christ. Through the paternal goodness of Yahveh, Abraham became the friend of God and Adam became the son of God, as described in the thirty eighth verse of the third chapter of Luke.

Nearly two centuries before the advent of Jesus the Christ, when the Jews came in contact with the Greeks, they found in Greek mythology a belief in Zeus-pitar or Jupiter, who was conceived as the supreme Deity and the Creator of the universe. He was not only the father of the gods and of the whole world, but also the father of the most powerful kings and heroes, who were called the children or the 'offspring of Zeus' in the literal sense of these terms. We all know that the gods of Greek mythology could marry mortal women of virtuous character and could beget children, while mortal men were allowed to marry goddesses. Æacus, for instance, was born of Ægina, but his father was Zeus the supreme Deity; while Achilles was the son of the goddess Thetis by a mortal father named Peleus.

These ideas, however, were not acceptable to the Jews; on the contrary, they were considered as blasphemous and were rejected by the orthodox Hebrews. History nevertheless tells us that the worship of Zeus-pitar or Jupiter was introduced into Babylon and Northern Palestine by Antiochus Epiphanes between 175 and 163 B.C.. The orthodox Jews revolted against this innovation; still there were many liberal-minded Jews among the Pharisees who liked the idea, accepted it, and preached it. Among these was Rabbi Hillel, one of the most prominent of Jewish priests of that epoch, who lived a few years before Christ and died when Jesus was ten years of age. He was considered by many scholars as the true master and prede-

cessor of Jesus and was held in great esteem by the Pharisaic sect of the Jews. He inculcated the belief in the merciful and fatherly character of Yahveh like that of Zeus-pitar, and it was he also who introduced the golden rule for the first time. At the same moment Philo and the neo-Platonist Jews in Alexandria were teaching the fatherly character of Yahveh and the only begotten sonship of the Greek Logos or the Word. Philo was a contemporary of Jesus, but he never even mentioned his name. Many of the Oriental scholars and higher critics of the New Testament, say that the writer of the Fourth Gospel must have been a follower of Philo, because, in this gospel alone, Jesus the Christ is identified with the Greek Logos which was explained by Philo as the only begotten Son of the almighty heavenly Father.

Some people claim that the Messianic hope of the Jewish prophets was fulfilled in the personality and character of Jesus and that for this reason he was called the Son of God; but critical readers of Jewish history know perfectly well that the Jewish conception of a Messiah had nothing to do with the Christian idea of the divine sonship of Jesus the Christ. History explains to us the social and political conditions of those days which gave rise to the Messianic conception of a deliverer from the sea of misfortune in which the Jewish nation was well-nigh drowned. For centuries the Jews had been conquered and subdued by the Persians, Greeks, and other stronger powers around them. Social intrigues, political insurrections, rebellions, and constant wars raged in almost every community and kept the people busy for many years before, during, and after the time of the Babylonian captivity. Such a period naturally kindles the fire of patriotism in the hearts of a nation and forces its members to be active in every possible way. The misfortunes and calamities which befell the descendants of Israel, made them remember the promises of Yahveh, which had been handed down to them through the writings of the prophets, and compelled them to seek supernatural aid for the fulfilment of those promises.

The unconquerable pride of the sons of Israel which made them feel that they were the chosen people of Yahveh, the only true God, who was their director and governor, stimulated their minds with the hope that through the super-

natural power of Yahveh the kingdom of their ancestors would be restored, that a member of David's house would appear as the Messiah (the Anointed), and sit on their throne, unite the twelve tribes of Israel under his sceptre and govern them in peace and prosperity. This was the first conception of a Messiah that ever arose in the minds of the Jews. It was the principal theme of the Jewish poets and prophets who lived during the Babylonian exile. The glory of the house of Israel and the earthly prosperity of the worshippers of Yahveh were the highest ideals of the Jews. They did not mean by Messiah a spiritual saviour of sinners from eternal perdition, for they did not believe in eternal life of any kind.

The Christian idea of a Messiah as the Saviour of the world and a deliverer from sin and evil does not owe its origin to the Messianic hope of the Jews, but to the Persian conception of the coming of *Sosiosh*, who, according to the promise of Ahura Mazda, would appear in the heavens on the Day of Judgment, destroy the evil influence of Ahriman and renovate the world. Some of the Pharisees accepted this idea. Most probably Jesus of Nazareth was familiar with this Persian conception of the Messiah, but at the same time he tried to spiritualize the Jewish ideal by preaching a reign of righteousness and justice, instead of a reign of war and strife between nations, a kingdom of peace and love instead of a dominion of earthly power and prosperity.

Thus we see why the Messianic hope of the Jewish prophets was not literally fulfilled in Jesus the Christ, and why the conception of a Messiah does not explain the true meaning of the Christian idea of the divine sonship of Christ. We have already seen how the Judaic conception of God made Yahveh extra-cosmic and unapproachable by human beings, and how a vast gulf of separation was thus created between God and man, between the Creator and his creatures. Many of the prophets felt it strongly, especially when Judaism came in touch with the Hellenic religion which made God so near and approachable to mortals. Various attempts were made to bridge over this gulf of separation between man and God, between the visible and the invisible ; and these attempts eventually resulted in the acceptance of the Logos theory of the Greek philosophers by the Alexandrian Jews, who, as I have already said, lived about the

time of Jesus the Christ. The foremost of them was Philo. It was he who first succeeded in showing the conception between the visible world and the invisible Creator through the Logos of the Stoics and neo-Platonists; but, at the same time, he gave a new interpretation to this word.

'Logos' is a Greek term meaning orginally 'word', not in the sense of mere sound, but also of thought embodied in sound—as when we utter a word, the meaning is included in the sound, since words are nothing but the outward expressions of thoughts which are imperceptible. From the time of Heraclitus, the most ancient Greek philosopher, down to the time of the neo-Platonists, this term was used by different thinkers in various senses. According to Heraclitus, Logos meant fire, which was conceived as the all-pervading essence of the universe out of which emanated the individual soul of man. Anaxagoras understood by Logos the cosmic mind, a portion of which was manifested in the human soul; but the Stoic philosophers who came later, meant by it reason or supreme intelligence. Logos pervaded all matter, and reason or intelligence in man was considered to be a part of the universal reason or intelligence or Logos, through which was established the connection between man and the divine mind. In fact, Logos always signified the nexus between the manifested world and its Cause.

As has already been said, Philo, being brought up in the neo-Platonic school, adopted this Stoic theory of Logos to explain the relation between Yahveh, the supreme Creator of the Semitic religion, and the visible mortal man of this world. But he meant by Logos the ideal creation which existed in the divine mind before the actual creation. For instance, before the creation of light, God said, 'Let there be light'. These words, however, were merely an audible expression of the thought or idea of light that existed in the divine mind: the creation of the external light was, therefore, nothing but the projection or expression of the idea or thought of light in the divine mind. As this ideal light may be called the connecting link between the gross visible light and the invisible divine mind, so the ideal creation becomes the bridge that spans the gulf of separation between the invisible creator and the gross phenomenal creation, and this idea or thought of the divine mind was the Logos of Philo; it signified the universal thought of the world or the

ideal world in the mind of the divine Being before anything came into existence. Like a dream, the world of ideas appeared in the divine mind and was afterwards projected in physical space, just as a carpenter, before he makes a chair, forms a mental image of it and then projects it outside. Since this Logos or the ideal world was the first emanation or expression of the cosmic mind, it was called the 'first born', 'the only begotten son', 'the unique son'; all these terms, however, were used by Philo and his followers in their poetical or metaphorical sense. According to this theory, the universal Logos included all the ideas and thoughts, or rather the perfect types of all created things that exist in the universe. Before a horse was created, there was a perfect idea or type of horse in the divine mind. We do not see this perfect type in the world; we may see a red or a black horse, a large or a small horse, but we cannot see the ideal horse. What we call a perfect horse is nothing but the nearest approach to the perfect ideal horse that exists eternally in the divine mind. So it is with every created species, thing or being. Before man came into existence, there was an ideal man or a perfect type of man in the thought of God, and its projection or physical manifestation became something like that ideal type, because the gross manifestation, being limited by time, space, and causation, cannot be exactly the same as the ideal type which is perfect.

This ideal, or the perfect type of man, which existed in the divine mind, is eternal and a part of the universal Logos. All human beings, therefore, are more or less imperfect expressions of that ideal man or Logos or the first begotten son of the divine mind. It does not refer to the human form alone, but also to the perfect character or the soul. The individual souls, however perfect or imperfect they may be in the actions of their daily life, are potentially the same as the Logos, or the universal ideal man that existed in God's mind before creation. Everyone of us is trying to express as perfectly as possible that ideal type of man in whose cast we have been moulded by the divine hand. Each one of us, therefore, is one with that first begotten son of God—such was the original meaning of the 'Son of God' according to Philo and his disciples. We must not forget, however, that Philo did not know Jesus the Christ, although he lived at the same time. The writer of the Fourth

Gospel, whoever he may have been, was an advocate of the Logos theory of Philo as well as a believer in Christ as the perfect type of man or the incarnate word of God on earth in the truest sense of the term. It was for this reason that he began the gospel with that famous verse, which has created so much confusion in the minds of Christian theologians: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'. The meaning of this passage will be clear, if we remember that the author of the Fourth Gospel identified the Word or Logos of Philo with Christ--but not with Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary—and that since then this Christ has become the only begotten Son of God.

Furthermore, it should be understood that the word 'Christ', like the word 'Logos' of Philo, did not at first mean any particular individual or personality, but it referred to the universal ideal type of man, or the perfect man who dwells in the divine mind from eternity to eternity. In this sense the word 'Christ' is as universal as the Logos. It is not confined to any particular person or nationality. We must not confound this ideal impersonal Christ or the only begotten Son of God with the historical personality of Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Mary; but we must take it in its true spiritual sense, we must understand that each individual soul, being the expression of the first-born Son of God, is potentially the same as the only begotten Son of God, or the child of immortal Bliss as it is said in Vedanta. When we have realized this impersonal ideal Christ in our souls, from that very moment we have become Christ-like; and it is then that the impersonal Christ, the only begotten son, will be born within us.

Very few of the true Christians can fully understand this most sublime universal meaning of the divine sonship of Christ, and, consequently, of every living soul. It is extremely difficult for them to extricate their minds from the maze of the traditional personality of Jesus of Nazareth. Students of Vedanta, on the contrary, can comprehend this universal meaning very easily, because in Vedanta the question of the historical personality of an individual, however great and spiritual he may be, is not the principal point to be discussed; its sole aim is to lift us above all limitations of personality and to lead us to the realization of the universal Truth or the divine sonship of each indi-

vidual soul. We are all children of immortal Bliss, of the omnipotent and omniscient divine Being. We are not children of some other being, nor are we children of earthly fathers. Parents have not created our souls, but, on the contrary, our souls existed even before the creation of the world. By our birthright, as it were, we possess the claim of divine sonship. No one can deprive us of this right. We may think of ourselves at present as mortals subject to birth and death, to grief, sorrow, and misery; we may call ourselves sons and daughters of men, but the time is sure to come when our spiritual eyes will be opened to the truth of our being as sons of the heavenly Father.

The expression 'Son of God' shows in a metaphorical way the extrinsic variety and the intrinsic unity that exist between the soul of man and the supreme Spirit. Outwardly, the child is different from the father, but his whole soul is one with the father. If we can leave out the external and go to the innermost depth of our souls, there we shall see and realize our divine relation, and eventually we shall become one with the supreme Spirit and say, as did Jesus of Nazareth, 'I and my Father are one'. We must learn that becoming means knowing and knowing is becoming. When we know ourselves as children of earthly fathers, we have become so; and when we know that we are children of God, we become such. This we shall be able to understand better from the parable of the King's son and the shepherd.

There was a very powerful king in ancient India. By his conquests he became emperor, but unfortunately in the prime of life he suddenly died and within a few months his queen passed away giving birth to his only child, the heir to the throne. The other members of the royal family, in order to usurp the throne, took the babe away, left him in a distant forest, and spread the news that the child was dead. Fortunately, he was discovered by a shepherd who went into the forest for hunting. This man had no children of his own and out of compassion he took the child, brought it home, and gave it to his wife, asking her to take care of it as her own babe. The child was brought up as a shepherd boy; he did not know anything of the secret, he called the shepherd his father, played with other shepherd boys and did his best to help his father in his work and to earn a share of his living. He felt some-

times very miserable and unhappy, but he did not know anything better.

After a few years, when he grew older, he happened to meet the old prime minister of the deceased emperor. The minister, who knew the whole secret, at once saw in the face of that young shepherd a resemblance to the emperor and instantly recognizing him, addressed and honoured him as the prince and heir to the throne. The shepherd youth looked at the minister in great amazement and could not believe his statements; but the minister persuaded him to come to the palace, made him sit on his father's throne and asked him to take care of the property and govern the empire. Gradually the mind of the young shepherd woke up, as it were, from a dream and he realized that he was the only son of the emperor, governed his empire, and became the emperor.

Even so it is with us, being children of the Emperor of the universe, we have forgotten our birthright and are acting like the shepherd boy. The moment that we know who we are and what we are, that very moment we shall become conscious of our divine heritage and shall understand that in reality we are not children of earthly parents, but of the Father of the universe. No one can deprive us of this divine birthright.

All the great Saviours of the world, like Krishna, Buddha, Christ, were conscious of their divine sonship from their childhood and never forgot it. They were like the prime minister; they came to the shepherd boy of the human soul to give the message of truth, that it is not the son of the earthly shepherd father, but of the Emperor of the universe. Let us enter into our divine heritage and rule our heavenly empire. Let us become like the Emperor of the universe. Let us folow the paths of the great Saviours of the world, each one of whom manifested in his life the perfect type of man, the ideal man, the Word or Logos. Let us obey their instructions and, by manifesting divinity through humanity, let us become perfect even as the Father in heaven is perfect; then we shall be happy both here and hereafter, and shall attain to that everlasting Bliss, which is the goal of all religions.

CHAPTER VIII

DIVINE PRINCIPLE IN MAN

'There is in this body a higher Soul, the Looker-on and the Sanctioner, the Sustainer and Experiences, the Mighty Lord, who is also designated the Supreme Spirit.'—Bhagavad Gita, XIII, 22.

'He who is the Omniscient Knower of all, whose glory is manifested in the universe, dwells in the heart and assuming the nature of the mind, becomes the guide of the body and of the senses. The wise who understand this, realize the Self-effulgent, Immortal, and Blissful One.'—Mundaka Upanishad, II, 2 Kh. 7.

The study of human nature is the most interesting and the most beneficial of all studies. The more we study ourselves, the better we can understand the universe, its laws, and the truth that underlies its phenomena. It is said, 'man is the epitome of the universe; whatever exists in the world is to be found in the body of man'. As, on the one hand, we find in man all those tendencies and propensities which characterize the lower animals, so on the other, we see him manifesting through the actions of his life all those noble qualities that adorn the character of One, whom we honour, respect, and worship as the divine Being. Human nature seems to be a most wonderful blending of that which is animal with that which is called divine. It is like the twilight before daybreak, through which the darkness of the night of the animal nature passes into the glorious sunshine of the supreme wisdom. Human nature may be called the state of transition from the animal into the divine. The animal nature includes the love of self or the attachment of one's self to one's body and to everything related to the body and the senses, desire for sense pleasures and enjoyments, the clinging to earthly life, fear of death and the struggle for existence. Each of these qualities or tendencies is to be found in the lower animals as well as in human beings, the difference being only in degree and not in kind.

The savage man who lives like a wild beast in a cave or

under trees and does not know how to build a house or cultivate the ground, but who sustains life by depending entirely upon fruits, roots, wild berries, or upon the birds and beasts that he can trap, expresses in all the actions of his life nothing more than what we have described as animal tendencies and animal propensities. If the Darwinian theory be true, then we can easily explain why there should be so little difference between primitive man and his distant ancestor, the chimpanzee, or some other member of the anthropoid species. When, however, the same wild man become partially civilized by learning to cultivate the land, to raise food and cook it, to build houses and live in communities, he no longer manifests these animal tendencies in their simpler and more savage forms. He gradually adopts more artful methods to accomplish his purposes. For instance, the struggle for existence depends chiefly upon physical force among savage tribes as well as among animals, while among civilized people in civilized countries a similar result in the form of the survival of the fittest is obtained, not by the display of brute force, but by art, skill, diplomacy, policy, lying, strategy, and hypocrisy. These are the offensive and defensive weapons of the socalled 'civilized man'.

All the vicious qualities and wicked deeds, such as murder, theft, robbery, and other crimes, which are to be found in civilized communities, are nothing but the expressions of the animal tendencies of man, working under the heavy pressure of the rigid laws of society, state, and government. They proceed from love of self or extreme attachment to the animal nature. Being guided by these lower tendencies, man becomes extremely selfish, and does not recognize the rights or comforts of his fellow-beings. On the contrary, he does everything to satisfy the cravings of his body and senses at the expense of his neighbours. But the moment that this savage man, or the man who lives like a lower animal begins to see the rights of others, learns to love and care for his fellow-beings in the same way that he loves his own dear self and cares for his own belongings, from that time he rises a step higher than the absolutely animal plane; he becomes truly human and gradually manifests the other qualities and tendencies that accompany this fundamental moral principle—to love one's neighbour as one's self.

Upon this foundation has been built the whole structure of ethics among all nations. The virtuous qualities such as disinterested love for humanity, mercy, justice, kindness towards others, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, all these help the animal man to expand the range of his love of self and to subdue all that proceeds from purely selfish attachment to his own body and senses. The higher we rise above the animal plane, the wider becomes the circle of self-love, and instead of being confined to the body and senses of the individual, it becomes general, covering the selves, not merely of dearest relatives and nearest friends, but of neighbours, countrymen, and at last, of all humanity. Thus, the more universal our love of self becomes, the nearer we approach the Divinity, because the divine principle is the universal Being, whose love flows equally towards all living creatures, as the sun shines equally upon the heads of the virtuous and the wicked.

Anything that is done, not with a motive confined to some particular person, community, or nation, but through love for all humanity, nay, with a feeling that seeks the benefit of all living creatures, is unselfish ; consequently, it is guided by the universal or divine principle. The tendency of the individual self of each man is not to remain confined within one narrow circle, but to go beyond the boundary of the circle of the animal nature, beyond human nature, and ultimately to become universal. All charitable acts and philanthropic deeds are but steps towards that one goal. Well has it been said by Ralph Waldo Emerson that, 'the life of man is a self-evolving circle, which from a ring imperceptibly small rushes on all sides outwards to new and larger circles, and that without end.'

Indeed the self of man has the constant tendency to break down all limitations, to transcend all boundaries, and to become one with the Self of the universe. A human being cannot rest contented, cannot remain perfectly satisfied while living within the limitations of his animal nature. He may appear to be contented for a time, or he may delude himself by thinking that he is perfectly happy and satisfied under these conditions, but the moment is sure to come when, being forced from within, he will give vent to the natural tendency to expand by struggling hard to reach out from the animal self and be united with the universal Self. This tendency is inherent in the very

nature of man and its expression will force him to control the lower animal desires and propensities, to become the absolute master of them, and will gradually lead him to live a moral and spiritual life.

The awakening may come at any time and under any circumstances. One may be suddenly awakened in the midst of all the comforts, luxuries, and pleasures of the earthly life. No one can tell when or how such an awakening will come to the individual soul. There have been many instances in India, and in other countries, of this sudden awakening of the higher tendency of the soul. Buddha was suddenly awakened, when he was enjoying all the pleasures and luxuries of a princely life, and when his mind was deeply absorbed in every enjoyment that a human being can possibly have. This awakening, which made Buddha one of the Saviours of the world and which has made others live on this earth like embodiments of Divinity, is not the result of some animal force or some lower tendency to be found in lower animals or in those who live like slaves of passion and desire, but it is the expression of a higher power. It is not love of the body or desire of the senses, not attachment to the pleasures and comforts of the animal self; it is just the opposite. It is love for humanity which makes one forget one's self. It is not a desire to gain something for one's own comfort, but it is a desire to help mankind, to remove their grievances, their sorrows and sufferings and to make them happy. It is not a clinging to earthly existence, but on the contrary, it is the expression of the desire to sacrifice one's own life for the sake of others without having the slightest fear of death. It is not a struggle for existence or the survival of the fittest at the expense of others, but it is the cessation of all gladiatorial fights, struggles, and competitions, and the attainment of peace, tranquillity, and happiness. It is making the weak to survive and the strong to be kind and merciful towards those who are about to be crushed by social competition. Are not these powers and tendencies diametrically opposed to those which characterize the animal man?

These higher powers and tendencies have been manifested again and again by different individuals at different times in different countries. The religious history of the world stands as a living witness of this fact. But the question arises, how

do we happen to possess these higher tendencies and higher powers? Did we inherit them from our anthropoid ancestors? Not indeed, because animal nature cannot produce anything that is not entirely animal. The believers in the Darwinian theory cannot explain the origin of these super-animal or rather superhuman tendencies. Have they been super-added to our animal nature from outside by the grace of some extra-cosmic Being, as it is supposed by the dualistic and monotheistic believers of Christianity and other religions? No, such a statement cannot be supported either by reason or by scientific investigation. No one has ever succeeded in proving when and how these powers and higher tendencies were super-added to the human soul. The most rational explanation lies in the statement in the book of Genesis: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him.'

Let us understand clearly the meaning of this passage. We are familiar with the popular meaning which seems absurd, when we examine it in the light of modern scientific knowledge. In the first place the creation of man out of nothing six thousand years ago, does not bear the test of modern geological research and discoveries. On the contrary, we are aware of the fact that man existed in the Tertiary period, several thousand years before this Biblical creation of man was supposed to have taken place. Secondly, we know that this word 'image' does not mean the physical form of man, nor does it refer to the first man Adam, who was supposed to have been the perfect image of God, before the Satanic tempation, and who, after the fall, lost that image and became imperfect, because of which it is said that, all human beings have since been born in sin. We cannot believe that all of us were born in sin and iniquity, and, having lost the divine image within us, thus became the sons of Satan or the Devil. If man was created in the image of God, it could not possibly mean that one particular man of a particular nation at a special time possessed His image, but it was meant for all human beings, irrespective of their caste, creed, or nationality.

We must remember that there are no exceptions in the laws of nature. That which we take for an exception refers to some hidden universal law or truth, whether we see or understand it or not, and that explanation is correct which har-

monizes with universal law and points out universal truth. If we admit the existence of the divine image in one man, we shall have to admit it in all human beings; otherwise, it will be an exceptional case, which cannot be true. As, by discovering the cause of the fall of one apple from one tree, we learn the universal law of gravitation, which explains that all apples under those circumstances will fall, so by knowing that one man was made in God's image, we understand the universal truth that all men, women, and children of all countries and of all times have been made in the divine image, whether or not they have felt it, realized it, or manifested it in their actions.

If, on the other hand, it were true that all of us were born in sin and iniquity or under Satanic influence, it would have been absolutely impossible for any man, at any time, to manifest any of those tendencies and powers, which we call divine, and we should be unable to explain, why the great sages and spiritual leaders of mankind, who flourished in India and in other countries, both before and after the Christian era, could show all the divine powers and qualities that characterized the only begotten Son of God. Their lives show that everyone of them manifested divinity in the actions of their daily life. Therefore, we must lay aside the mythical meaning of that scriptural passage, and understand it in its universal sense. Furthermore, this universal meaning of the divine image in man was most strongly emphasized by the great seers of truth in India from the very ancient times and centuries before the book of Genesis was written or thought of. The same universal idea is the foundation of the philosophy and religion of Vedanta.

Vedanta teaches that when we speak of a man or woman as the image of God, we do not mean his or her physical form, but we mean the individual ego or the soul. If the divine Being or God be this universal spirit, then His image cannot be the physical form of man; this does not convey any idea or meaning at all. The ego or the soul of each individual man or woman is the image of Divinity. This idea has been beautifully expressed in Vedanta: 'In the cave of the heart have entered the two, the one is the eternal, absolute, real, perfect, and self-effulgent like the sun, and the other the individual

ego or soul, is like its reflection, or shadow, or image. The one is like the fountain-head of the blessed qualities and the infinite source of all divine powers, while the other contains the partial reflection of those qualities and powers.'

Thus, according to Vedanta, every individual soul, whether it be more or less animal in its thoughts and actions, possesses the divine image and is no other than the image of the divine principle or Being. The divine Being is one and universal, but its reflections or images are many. As the image of the sun, falling upon the dull and unpolished surface of a piece of metal, does not properly reflect the grandeur and power of that self-luminous body, but appears dull and imperfect, so the divine image, falling upon the dull surface of the animal nature, cannot reflect all the blessed qualities; cannot manifest all the divine powers, but, on the contrary, appears animal in its tendencies and propensities. As the same image of the sun will shine forth, brighter and more effulgent when the surface of the metal is polished, so the individual soul will show its brighter and more effulgent aspect and will more fully reflect the divine qualities, when the heart which contains the image is polished and made free from the dirt of animal desires and animal tendencies; then and then alone, this same individual soul will begin to manifest all the blessed qualities like justice, mercy, kindness, and disinterested love for all humanity. These powers are latent in all individuals, but they will be expressed when the heart is purified. 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God', said Jesus of Nazareth.

The perfect manifestation of these divine powers depends entirely upon the removal of all obstructions like desire for earthly pleasure, for the enjoyments and comforts of earthly life, attachment to the gross physical body and to the senses, which force the individual soul to remain on the animal plane. Yet, however animal the expression of the nature of an ordinary man of the world may be, his soul is still the image of the Divinity which holds potentially in its bosom all divine powers and all blessed qualities. Nay, even the souls of lower animals are potentially divine, according to Vedanta. The evolution of nature is required to bring out these potential tendencies, powers, and qualities into their actual or real mani-

festations. Climbing the ladder of the evolution of nature, each individual soul or germ of life expresses its latent powers, first, through the limitations of the animal nature as animal tendencies and animal desires, and lastly, as spiritual powers by rising above all limitations, by transcending the boundaries of the various circles of animal, moral and spiritual nature, and approaching the abode of the infinite divine principle. At that time, the individual soul becomes absolutely free from the bondage of nature, enjoys the supreme Bliss which is divine, and manifests all the blessed qualities. In passing through these various stages the individual ego studies its own powers, gains experience and realizes all the powers that are lying dormant within the soul.

Many people ask the question, 'Why is it necessary for the individual soul to gain experience, when it is potentially divine?' The very fact that creation or projection means the manifestation of the potential energy as kinetic or as actual reality, forces the soul to objectify and project the dormant activities on to the plane of consciousness; otherwise, how can the soul learn its own powers when they are on the subconscious plane? Take as illustration the deep sleep state: when all the sense-powers, such as the power of walking, moving, talking, and all the mental and intellectual functions become unmanifested, do we know in that state what powers we possess? No, certainly not. We can only know their existence, when they are brought out on the conscious plane, when they are awakened. Is not this awakening of the dormant powers that lie buried on the subconscious plane, the same thing as the gaining of experience?

If, for a moment, all the individual souls that exist in the universe should cease to manifest their dormant powers, instantly the relative existence of phenomenal activity would vanish and the whole world would go back to its primordial, undifferentiated condition of nescience, which is almost similar to the unmanifested state of deep sleep, when we do not dream. Therefore, each individual soul is bound to gain experience after experience in the process of this manifestation of its latent powers and potential energy. Having experienced the powers and actions of the animal nature with their results, the soul longs for higher manifestations, tries to rise above

that plane, and, after realizing the effects of the moral and spiritual nature, it reaches perfection. In this state the soul becomes absolutely happy and contented, and, transcending the limitations of sense-powers, self-love and selfishness, it manifests the blessed qualities in the actions of its everyday life.

This idea was illustrated by an ancient sage in India thus: 'Two birds of the most beautiful plumage dwell upon the tree of life, they are bound together by the tie of closest friendship. The one sits calm, serene, contented, peaceful and happy, and constantly watches the movements of his friend like a witness; while the other bird flies and hops from branch to branch, being attracted by the sight of the sweet and inviting fruits which the tree of life bears. When he is drawn toward a fruit, he tastes it and enjoys the sensation; then he tries another which appears more attractive, but unfortunately, when he tastes it, he finds it extremely bitter and does not like it. (We must remember here that the tree of life is not like an ordinary tree; it bears all kinds of fruits from the sweetest to the bitterest). Having tried the various fruits according to his desires. the bird happens to come to one that is exceedingly bitter, and having tasted it, he suffers intensely, and unhappy and distressed, he remembers his friend, whom he had forgotten for the time being. He looks for him and at last finds him seated on the top of the tree, calm, peaceful, and perfectly contented. He envies his peace, happiness, and contentment, and slowly approaches him. As he comes nearer and nearer, lo! he is forcibly drawn into the perfect being of that witness-like friend, for he was his reflection or image.'

The bird which flies from branch to branch, which enjoys and suffers, is the individual ego or the living soul of man. The fruits of this tree of life are nothing but the results of all the good and bad acts which the ego performs; and the witness-like friend is the perfect divine Being, whose image the individual soul is. Thus, having experienced all the fruits of our good and bad deeds, when we become discontented and unhappy, we seek our true eternal friend, admire him, aspire to attain to his peace and happiness, go nearer and nearer, and ultimately become one with him. It is then that we feel happy and contented, it is then that true peace and happiness come.

As the image or reflection of the sun cannot exist for a

second independent of that self-luminous heavenly body, so the individual soul, being the image of God, cannot exist even for a moment without depending upon the divine principle. The individual ego owes its life, its intelligence, its intellect, mind and all other mental and physical powers to that infinite source of all powers, all knowledge, all love, and everlasting happiness. In fact the individual soul does not possess anything. All these powers and forces that we are expressing in our daily life, whether animal, moral, or spiritual, do not belong to us, but proceed from that one inexhaustible source. Nor is the divine principle far from us; He is the soul of our soul, the life of our life, and the omnipotent essence of our being.

'The divine principle is smaller than the smallest and larger than the largest; it pervades the infinite space and also dwells in the minutest atom of atoms; it resides in the innermost sanctuary of the soul of every man and woman; whosoever realizes that omnipresent Divinity, whose image the individual soul is, unto him come eternal peace and perpetual bliss, unto none else, unto none else'.

HUMAN AFFECTION AND DIVINE LOVE

"Raso vai Sah ; Rasam hi evayam labdhva anandi bhavati."

God is Love. Whoever tastes the sweetness of divine Love, attains eternal happiness in Life.

—Taittiriya Upanishad, II, 7.

*Life is Love, and whole form and power of Life consist in Love and spring from Love. **Love is satisfaction with itself, joy in itself, enjoyment in itself,—and therefore Blessedness ; and thus it is clear that Life, Love, and Blessedness, are absolutely one and the same.*

—J. G. Fichte

*All true love, **proceed from the penetration of the principium individual soul, which* * * results in perfect sanctification and salvation.

—Arthur Schopenhauer

Love becomes more and more important as we ascend further. Love is an activity of the Soul desiring the Good.

—Plotinus

CONTENTS

The human soul possesses the germ of the indescribable something—The tie of friendship and others would be broken forever if that something was not behind them—Though undefinable, still it has a name *Love*—All human affections are but the manifestations of that Love—Love of self is found in everything—Self means the expression of Love—Man is the only animal who knows love objectively as well as subjectively—Lowest form of love is extremely limited—The same love gradually develops and is perfect in man—Animal love is the love of gross body—It is limited—Animal love is blind—When true love begins—The love of a mother to her child—Human affection means the mutual attachment and dependence—The nature of love is to attract—When does the climax of attachment reach—Love is the attraction between a soul and a soul—What the Vedanta says about love—Selfish motives and desires—Human affection, when governed by selfishness, produces a strong passion—Human affection seeks a return of love—Mutual love is human—Forgetfulness of our little self or individuality leads us Godwards—It is a mere self-delusion to seek the fulness of love in any man or woman—Love of a mother, a father and of a husband—In India divine Love personifies in the form of an Incarnation—A true lover of God—Divine Love brings a cessation of all sorrow, suffering and pain—It breaks the fetters of all bondage—The object of attachment in human affection is changeful—What the religion of Vedanta teaches—Divine Love seeks no return—Ideals set by Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and others—Divine Love knows no fear—A true lover of God loves everything of the world—Absolute self-surrender is necessary—Divine Love brings superconscious state —Sri Ramakrishna and love—The Life of a God-intoxicated soul—The two characteristics of ecstatic love—Chaitanya Deva and love—There are three kinds of love—Divine Love cannot be acquired by only reading books—The God lover renounces everything—Reunion through Love—Manifestation of Divine Love.

CHAPTER I

HUMAN AFFECTION AND DIVINE LOVE

The human soul possesses the germ of that indescribable something which poets, dramatists, artists and philosophers of all ages have endeavoured to describe by words and poems, by stories and fables, by symbols and images, by paintings and sculptures. That something is a charm which throws a spell around itself and whosoever comes near it remains enchanted and spell-bound. It sweetens the bitter experiences of life, enlivens worried and dejected hearts and animates them with vigour, strength, hope and cheerfulness. It makes one forget the drudgery of this world and infuses renewed energy to perform the duties of life and to enjoy the toils and troubles with peace, tranquillity and happiness. Were it not for that something, earthly existence would be dull and dreary, human hearts would be dry like a desert and expressions of human affection would be neither seen nor heard in this universe of transitory phenomena. The tie of friendship and the invisible cord that binds the hearts of parents and children, and unites the souls of a husband and a wife, or of a lover and the beloved, would be broken forever, if that something were not behind all those tender feelings and attachments which we call human affections. In fact it is that unspeakable something which expresses itself as human love and human affection, brings peace and happiness to the soul, however momentary they may appear to be. Although it cannot be defined, still it has been called by various names in different countries. In the English language it is called 'Love'.

Whenever this word is uttered, it touches our hearts and creates a thrilling sensation in the soul of a genuine lover. All human affections are but the manifestations of that wonderful power of love. It is one power that governs our lives. It is inseparable from our being. We do not ask what is love, instinctively we understand its nature. Why?

Because from the very moment that we are conscious of our own existence we begin to love ourselves, either consciously or

unconsciously. This love of self is to be found in lower animals as well as in human beings. Wherever there is the expression of self, there is also the manifestation of the love of self. Lower animals cannot know their love of self objectively, but they know it subjectively; they love themselves instinctively, unconsciously as it were. Man is the only animal who is capable of knowing his love of self objectively as well as subjectively.

In the lowest forms of animals this love of self is extremely limited in its sphere. It is confined to their bodies only. But when we rise a little higher in the animal kingdom we notice that in the species of Mammalia the love of self extends a little beyond their bodies. They feel for their offspring, and take caree of them as they do for their own bodies. This is the first expression of motherly affection. The same love gradually develops and manifests itself in man as human love, which is wider in range and stronger in power.

Animal love in man is the love of self, which is identified with the gross physical body. The body being the centre of love, animal love includes love of that which is connected with the body, of every object that is related to the physical form and of all things that bring a pleasing sensation or a comfortable feeling to the animal self.

This love leads to the worship of the gross physical body. The vast majority of mankind love their bodies and bodily comforts. To them that is the be-all and end-all of their life. They become strongly attached to their material forms and express their love of self by decorating their bodies with various things. From the tattooing of the body of a savage to the wearing of the most expensive garments and valuable jewels of a fashionable, up-to-date Parisienne, at every step this love of self and worship of the body are manifested in different ways.

Animal love forces one to seek pleasures of the senses and physical comforts. This love of self as identified with the body is very narrow and limited. It is called attachment to the animal self, or selfishness. Animal love is blind and he who lives on this plane, is extremely selfish, cruel and heartless toward others; but when the same man rises above animal nature, his love becomes less selfish. He, then, feels for others as he feels for himself. It is then human love.

Everyone of us living on the human plane is conscious of

the feeling of human love, because all the mankind recognize and love a lover. Whenever and wherever a true lover appears like a magnet, he attracts and draws loving souls around him, and transforms them with the magnetic power of love. The loving heart of a true mother which sends forth the rays of motherly affection, awakens the germ of love that is latent in the soul of her child. Gradually it begins to respond, and becomes attached to its mother just as much as a true mother is attached to her little one. This strong feeling of attachment lies at the bottom of all human affection. As a loving mother is attached to her baby, so loving children, loving youths, and loving friends all become attached to one another. The difference is only in degree and not in kind. Mutual attachment and mutual dependence are the signs of human affection; and this strong attachment, again, is the result of a kind of attraction which exists in the nature of love.

The nature of love is to attract. Wherever there is an expression of love, there is manifested a kind of mutual attraction first, and then mutual attachment and mutual feeling of possession. But in the intensity of love that attachment becomes so close that the lover and the beloved both are united into one. They have two separate bodies; but their mind, heart and soul are turned in the same key. When the one is struck the other responds. Therefore we may say that the climax of attachment is reached when there is perfect union and absolute oneness between the lover and the beloved. The same attraction which is known on the material plane as gravitation, molecular attraction, and chemical affinity when manifesting itself on the soul plane, is called love. Love is the attraction between a soul and a soul. Matter cannot attract the soul. Like attracts the like. We may think by mistake that the dead matter attracts the soul, but in reality it is the soul that attracts another soul. The mother loves the beautiful face of her child and kisses it. However ugly the child may be, the mother does not see that. We have never seen a mother who does not consider her new-born babe to be the best, finest and most beautiful of all. Do you think that when a true mother loves the face of her child, she loves merely the material particles that make up its beautiful form? Certainly not. The particles of matter cannot attract the soul of the mother. It

is the soul of the child lying behind the material face that attracts the soul of the mother. If the child dies, the same mother will not care for the material body of the dead babe. It is for this reason said in the Vedanta: "A mother loves her child not for the child's sake, not for its material form, but for the sake of the soul, the *Atman*, the Lord that lives in the child". The mother may not know it, but it is true, nevertheless. Similarly, "a wife loves her husband not for the sake of his physical form, but for the soul, the *Atman* that lies behind his body".[1] Wherever there is true love there is that pure attraction between two souls.

But ordinary human love or human affection which binds the soul to earthly conditions and makes it attached to the pleasures of the senses and which is governed by selfish motives and selfish desires is blind. It brings sorrow, suffering and misery in the end. The excess of ordinary human affection generally leads to tragic results which we so often notice around us, and the graphic descriptions of which we so often read in the pages of the novels and dramas of the world.

Human affection, when governed by selfishness, produces a strong passion which rouses the animal craving for the gratification of the sense desires. From the standpoint of the world it is the most natural and most desirable thing, but from the standpoint of divine love it is nothing but misdirected love. It is an animal passion. All evil and wickedness which we find in a community and whatever is bad and sinful in a society is but the ill-directed working out of the feeling of love. It is the manifestation of selfish love, while all goodness and virtue are the results of acts which proceed from properly directed unselfish love.

Human affection, which lies at the root of murder, theft, robbery and all sorts of vices, is extremely selfish. The same human love when misdirected makes one a thief or a liar, a robber or a murderer, but when guided by unselfishness, leads to self-sacrifice for the sake of another. A man who sacrifices his own life in saving that of another, loves another's life exactly in the same degree as a murderer loves his own self when he kills a man to enrich himself or to fulfil his selfish motive. The

[1] Cf. Swami Abhedananda: *Self-Knowledge*, pp. 164-165.

direction of love is proper and right in the case of the former, while in the case of the latter, it is improper and wrong.

Human affection naturally seeks a return of love. No one has ever seen a lover on the human plane in wordly life who does not expect to be loved in turn or who does not seek some kind of return for his or her love. But on the spiritual plane there are hundreds of instances where men and women have sacrificed everything, even their lives, for the love of some ideal, whether it is personal or impersonal, without seeking any return whatsoever. There is the expression of divine love. So long as love is mutual, that is, for the benefit of both the lover and the beloved, it is human. But when the stream of love flows toward an object simply for the good of the object and makes the lover forget himself for the time being, that love is uplifting and divine. Any thing or any act that makes us forget our small personality, our little individuality, our dear little self, is divine, because it leads Godward. That we should practice, that we should cultivate, and anything that emphasizes our small personality, that centres our thought upon the sense of *I, Me, Mine*—my opinion, my this and my that—is low down on the human plane, is not spiritual, is not divine. Human love or human affection which is limited by personality and is confined within the narrow sphere of personal self, and which strongly brings out the sense of *I, Me, Mine,* should be transformed into divine love by not thinking of one's self, by not seeking one's own comfort and pleasure, but by directing it toward the soul or the *Atman* of the beloved, or toward the spiritual ideal, which is divine and perfect.

It is true that human nature seeks companionship and longs for a suitable match for love; but all mortal companions on this plane are only for the time being. That craving of the soul will not be absolutely satisfied until the Eternal object of love is discovered.[1] The Eternal object of love can be realized in the finite and concrete man or woman when we rise above

[1] "As all love that attaches itself to a person must be impermanent, the love of a woman is doomed to unhappiness. All such love has this sort of failure inherent in it." "All love that is attached to enduring worth is attached to the absolute, to the idea of God, whether that idea be a pantheistic conception of enduring nature or remain transcendental: the love that attaches itself to an individual thing, as to a woman, must fail".—*Sex and Character,* by Otto Weininger, p. 247.

the physical plane and understand that each individual soul is divine and immortal. It is a mere self-delusion to seek the fulness of love in any man or woman. Therefore, it is necessary to make the Eternal Ideal the object of all human affection.

Father's love should recognize that Ideal as his child. Mother's love should see it in her new-born babe; the love of a brother or of a sister should establish fraternal relation with It. A husband who is devoted to his wife should think of his Eternal Ideal in the soul of his wife; and a wife should put her highest spiritual Ideal in the soul of her beloved husband and love him with her whole heart and soul. The love of a friend should look upon It as his dearest friend and the divine companion. In this way all earthly relations could be spiritualized and all human affection could in course of time be transformed into the expressions of divine love in daily life. There would be no more cause of dissatisfaction in a household, no more fighting between brothers and sisters, no more quarreling between parents and children, no more divorce on account of incompatibility of temper. Then each of these human affections will be like a path that leads to divine reality and eternal happiness. Each human affection will then find its right mark to the eternal father, divine mother, divine child, divine husband and divine friend, since Vedanta teaches that Divinity dwells in each individual soul and can be realized through any of these relations.

In India a true and sincere seeker after divine love personifies his divine ideal in the form of an incarnation of God whom he worships as his divine master, and loves Him with his whole heart and soul, establishing all relations which are needed in human affection. He says: "O Lord, Thou art my mother, father, friend and relative; Thou art my knowledge and wealth; Thou art my all in all". A true lover of God thus forgets all earthly relations and enters into the holy spiritual family of his divine master. This is the spiritual birth of the soul. If absolute sincerity and earnestness be at the bottom of his heart, and if his love be truly unselfish, then the disciple through this devotion will eventually reach the supreme goal of divine love. The stream of human affection breaking down all the barriers of blood relation and the mountain of selfishness, falls in that river of divine love which is constantly flowing from

the pure heart and unselfish soul of his spiritual master, into the infinite ocean of Divinity. Thus the true disciple and the divine master become one in spirit and reach the goal together. In this sense a true spiritual master or divine incarnation may be called the mediator, the Saviour of such individual souls who are earnest and sincere seekers after spirituality and divine love. This is the path of love for those who are fortunate enough to find such an all-absorbing spiritual ideal or divine incarnation in a human form. Blessed are they who have become the disciples of a divine master.

In each individual heart is flowing a stream of love, which like a confined river constantly seeks an outlet through which it can run into that ocean of divine love which is called God. It may not find any outlet for many years, or it may remain bottled up for ages within the narrow limits of animal self, but it never loses that innate tendency to run towards the infinite ocean of love. It must find its way out of that limitation sooner or later. Every drop of that stream of love which flows in a human heart, however, contains the germ of divine love. As a drop of water in a river contains all the chemical properties of the water of the ocean, so a drop of love, whether pure or impure, is of the same nature as a drop from the ocean of divine love. It varies in its character according to the direction toward which it flows and to the nature by which it is governed. When it flows toward one's own self it is animal; when toward another for mutual benefit or for earthly return, it is worldly and human; but when it is directed toward the divine Ideal it is divine.

Divine love brings a cessation of all sorrow, suffering and pain; it lifts the soul above all bondage, breaks the fetters of selfish attachment and worldliness. All selfishness vanishes and the soul enters into the abode of absolute freedom and everlasting happiness.

The object of attachment in human affection is a changeable and mortal object, while the object of attachment in divine love is the unchangeable and immortal Being, the Lord of the universe.

Some people have an erroneous notion that religion of Vedanta teaches that we should not encourage human affection and human love. On the contrary, Vedanta teaches that our

life on the human plane will be bitter and dry like a desert if it be not sweetened by human love. If the dew drops of human affection do not moisten the dry and barren heart of a selfish man, how can the germ of divine love which is latent in each soul, sprout and grow into a big tree bearing the blossoms of kindness, sympathy, fellow compassion and all other tender feelings which produce the fruits of peace, freedom and happiness! So long as we are on the human plane we should cultivate and practise human love and human affection. But when soul learns by bitter experience that the object of human love and affection is only an ordinary mortal, when it longs for an immortal something which is higher and greater, when the soul rises from the human to the spiritual plane, and obtains glimpses of that which is unchangeable and absolute; how can such a soul be satisfied with human limitations and human imperfections! It is then that the soul longs for the expression of all affection on the spiritual plane. It is then that the soul becomes a seeker after the Absolute and a lover of the divine Ideal. Until that time has arrived, one does not care for anything that is higher than human affection. As on the human plane, forced love is never sweet and genuine, so on the spiritual plane love for the spiritual ideal or divine master must be spontaneous and intense, unwavering and whole-souled; otherwise dissatisfaction and unhappiness will be the result, if it be forced in any way by any being. Therefore, according to Vedanta human affection and divine love each has its value in its own sphere.

Divine love seeks no return. Whenever there is a feeling of getting anything as a return of love, it is like a shop-keeper's love for his customer, or like a paid servant's love for his master. There is no expression of unselfish love in the service of a paid servant, because he is bound to serve; otherwise he will not receive his wage, and will be dismissed. True love does not manifest itself in bondage or slavery, but in freedom; similarly, a man who serves God for some kind of return has no unselfish love in his heart. A priest who receives salary for his service or preaching, does not serve, does not preach through pure love, but for that return. If he did not get his recompense he would stop preaching. It is for this reason a professional preacher or a paid priest is held in such a low estimation in India. But

he works through pure love, whose work is a free offering to the world. Such a man never thinks of earning his livelihood by selling his works. He is sure that the world would feed him and take care of him. He never thinks of the morrow, but the morrow thinks of him. This grand expression of divine love was demonstrated in the lives of Jesus the Christ, Buddha, Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and other great preachers of Truth. The commercial instinct of many of the modern preachers has blinded their eyes with a veil of wordliness and shop-keeper's love, and therefore they do not see the true spirit of Christ's teachings. How many religious teachers of to-day explain that divine love which knows no return, and how few preachers do preach without seeking any remuneration for their labour? There is a great difference between a professional preacher and a true lover of God. The one is a beggar, a shop-keeper and the other offers freely what he has to give and thinks of no return of wealth, name, fame or social position.

Divine love brings non-attachment to worldly pleasures and motive power is fear of punishment? No. Can there be love in a slave who serves his master through fear of being punished if he did not serve? Can there be love in the heart of a devotee who worships God to avoid eternal punishment? No. Love and fear cannot dwell in the same place at the same time. Fear proceeds from attachment to self, while true love makes one unattached to self. Fear and love are like two opposite poles. Divine love conquers all fear. Do we not see that when a girl truly falls in love with her lover, she loses all fear? She is not afraid of her parents, relatives, the criticism of her friends, the social custom, the laws of the state, not even death. So a true lover of God does not fear anything in the universe. With this intense feeling of fearlessness the martyrs have boldly faced brutal persecution, excruciating agony and have gone to the stake to be burned alive with a smiling countenance.

A true lover of God loves everything of the world. He does not see good or evil, misery or sorrow, disease or death. Divine love opens his spiritual eye and he realizes that everything comes from God, that everything is God's, that all living creatures are His children. He sees the divine ideal as manifesting Himself through all animate and inanimate objects of the universe. So he cannot help loving everything and all

creatures equally. He feels that nothing in the world can happen without God's will. He surrenders his individual will to the universal Will. Resigning himself entirely to the all knowing Will, he welcomes most heartily everything good or bad that comes in his way. If a disease comes, he says: "My Beloved has sent me His guest. I must take care of him, and serve him". He thinks himself extremely blessed at every moment of his life, and welcomes death as he would welcome his most beloved sister, saying: "Come, sister Death, come and take the offering of my body". How can such a soul be afraid of death? This type of a true lover of God is still to be found in India. Absolute self-surrender and self-resignation take away all fear. This is the state when a man can say from the very bottom of his soul and with perfect assurance: "Let Thy Will be done, and not mine". Ordinary persons repeat it like a parrot without having any feeling of true self-surrender in their hearts.

Divine love brings non-attachment to worldly pleasures and enjoyments. As a true mother forgets all pleasures and enjoyments when she kisses and fondles her new-born babe, as that all-absorbing motherly love swallows up her attachment to other things, and makes her extremely attached to the child, as she unconsciously renounces every other thought, so a true lover of God unconsciously renounces the desires for any other pleasure or enjoyment. Therefore, divine love makes him unattached to the things of the world. It brings to the soul absolute freedom from the bondage of selfishness and ignorance.

It is nobler and better than good works, greater than knowledge, higher than concentration and meditation, because all these end in divine love, while divine love is its own end. It is the easiest path of all.

Divine love straightens out all crookedness of the heart and destroys the germs of vanity and self-conceit which are deeply rooted in human soul. It cannot be confined by any scripture, but the words and deeds of such a true lover of God become the scriptures of the world.

Divine love brings the highest ecstatic or superconscious state in which the individual soul eternally communes with God, the universal Spirit. In this state of ecstasy the soul of a *bhakta* becomes intoxicated, as it were, with the wine of divine

love. He cannot stand on his feet, he talks in a tongue which no one can understand. Ordinary persons may call him insane because they do not know him in the least.

In India I saw Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna who is regarded as the latest divine manifestation of the present age. He attained to this ecstasy and lived as the perfect embodiment of divine love. In his ecstatic condition he used to be intoxicated just as much as a drunkard would be after drinking bottles of wine. Many people imagined that perhaps he was in the habit of drinking; and when he used to talk in a tongue unknown to human beings they thought that he was mad. Hearing these remarks Ramakrishna replied: "Yes, what people say is perfectly true. In the insane asylum of this world who is not mad? Everyone is mad after something or other; one is mad after a wife, another after a husband, a third after wealth, some after name, fame or objects of ambition or power. Show me one who is not mad after any one of these transitory things, but I am mad after God, who is eternal and everlasting, the Soul of my soul; which is better?"

Such a God-intoxicated soul does not care for what others would say of him. In his eyes nothing exists but he himself and his most beloved Lord. The whole world is on one side, while he is on the other. His spiritual strength knows no bounds. Whosoever has ever tasted one single drop of that soul-stirring divine love, has gained infinite strength and unlimited power which is able to conquer the whole world within the twinkling of an eye. His body may be killed or crucified by the world, but he is immortal as the Lord Himself. Do you think that the souls of the true lovers of God who lived in the past are dead now? No. Each one of them is perfect and blissful and divine. Each one will live with the Lord forever throughout all eternity.

A true lover of God does not care for salvation, nor for *Nirvana,* nor for heavenly pleasures, nor does he fear rebirth in this world of phenomena. His constant prayer is:

"O Lord! O Imperishable One! I do not care whether I am born thousands of times over again. Wherever I wander, may I always have undying love and everlasting devotion to Thee; O Embodiment of absolute Existence, Intelligence, Bliss and Love!"

Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna says:

"The two characteristics of ecstatic love are, first, the forgetfulness of the external world, and second, the forgetfulness of one's own body which is so dear to one. The first is like the unripe mango, the second is like the ripe mango. Ecstatic love of God is like a string in the hands of the *bhakta* which binds God. The devotee holds the Lord under his control, so to speak. The Lord must come to him whenever he calls out to Him. In Persian books it is written that within the flesh are the bones, within the bones is the marrow, within the marrow, the last and innermost of all, is this ecstatic love. Sri Krishna is called Tribhanga; that is, the usual posture of His body is bent in three different angles. Now a soft substance alone can take such an angular shape, so this form of Sri Krishna implies that His whole being must have been made very tender by this ecstatic love.

"Chaitanya Deva was the incarnation of divine love or *bhakti*. He came to teach mankind true *bhakti*. He used to have three states of consciousness in ecstasy. First, consciousness of the gross and subtle body. At this time he would repeat the Name of the Lord and sing His praises in *sankirtana*. Second, consciousness of the casual body alone. In this state he would become intoxicated with ecstatic joy, and retaining partial consciousness of the external, he would dance in company with other *bhaktas*. Third, consciousness of the Absolute. In this state he would enter into the highest realm of *samadhi*, and rising above all sense-consciousness, his body would remain apparently lifeless. These states correspond to the five sheaths of the soul in Vedanta. According to Vedanta the gross body includes the material form which is the outermost sheath and the sheath of *prana* or the sense-organs and sense-powers. The subtle body includes two sheaths, mental and intellectual. The casual body is the sheath of joyfulness. Beyond these five is the true Self, the Absolute. When the mind reaches this state, the highest *samadhi* or Godconsciousness is the result.

"Suppose you see God, or that God manifests Himself to you. Will you say to Him: 'Lord, do Thou grant that I may have lots of dispensaries and hospitals, schools and colleges!' A true devotee shall rather pray in this wise: 'Grant, O good Lord, that I may have a niche in the Lotus of Thy Feet, that

it may be my privilege to live always in Thy Holy Presence and that I may have deep and unalloyed devotion unto Thee'.

"There are three kinds of love,—unselfish (*samartha*), mutual (*samanajasa*), and selfish (*sadharani*). The unselfish love is of the highest kind. The lover only minds the welfare of the beloved and does not care for his own sufferings. In mutual love the lover not only wants the happiness of his beloved but has an eye towards his own happiness also. It is middling. The selfish love is the lowest. It only looks towards its own happiness, no matter whether the beloved suffers weal or woe."

"Q. Can divine Love be acquired by reading books ?

"A. The Hindu almanacs contain predictions of the annual rainfall, mentioning how many inches of rain will fall throughout the country. But if we squeeze the book, so full of rain predictions, not even a drop of water can be got out of it. So also, many good sayings are to be found in holy books, but merely reading them will not make one spiritual. One must practise the virtues taught therein to acquire the love of God."

"Q. Why does the God-lover renounce everything for Him?

"A. The moth, after seeing the light, never returns to darkness ; the ant dies in the sugar-heap, but never retreats therefrom ; similarly the God-lover gladly sacrifices his life for the attainment of divine Bliss and cares for nothing else".

CHAPTER II

RENUNCIATION THROUGH LOVE

There are two paths, the one leads to worldliness and the other to the realization of Divinity. Those who travel on the path of the world, seek the pleasures of phenomenal life, become attached to the objects of senses, and cling to earthly existence. Their whole heart and soul are centred upon themselves and they only care for those objects which are related to them, either directly or indirectly. Being guided by selfish motives, they work for results, and so enjoy or suffer according to the nature of those works. In fact, they are bound by desires and passions, are slaves of anger, hatred, and jealousy, and their love of petty self is extremely strong. The senses of *I, me, mine* predominate in all the actions of their lives. They devote most of their time and energy to enrich themselves at others' expense, seeking earthly prosperity, and thinking that success in business is the highest aim and object of their lives. They do not hesitate to tell lie, to commit various wicked deeds, and to injure the fellow members of the society, in order to serve their selfish motive or purpose. They are also blind to the moral and spiritual laws of the universal. Actuated by the love of petty self, they accumulate wealth, desire and powers, and long for position, name and fame in the society. There is no end of their ambition; they are rather mad for their worldly treasures. The men and women of the world think today that they have gained this and tomorrow they will accomplish that. They think that they are the rulers and masters of men, and also the masters of the society. They believe that everybody of the society should bow down before their name, wealth, power, and social rank. And so they struggle hard to fulfil their ambitious desires, their minds are restless with worry and anxiety, they do not see far enough and they do not realize the true nature of their souls. They have no conception of things which lie beyond the reach of the senses and cannot be perceived by sense powers. In fact, the minds of the followers on the path of worldliness (*samsara*) are covered with the veil of ignorance. They do not see things as they are in reality, and so they mistake the body for the soul and the soul for the

body, matter for spirit and spirit for matter. Thus the travellers on the path of worldliness are seldom happy, rather they are always discontented. Being subject to the law of *karma,* they are born again and again, and continue to reap the results of their acts, performed during their earthly career.

The other path which leads to the realization of Divinity, runs in the opposite direction. Travellers on this path are very few. Their tendencies are really different. Because they do not care for things which attract the mind of ordinary men and women of the world, and they realize the emptiness in the pleasures of the world. Their soul long for undisturbed peace and true happiness. They desire to get away from the people and also from the society. The senses of *I, me, mine* seem to be a source of bondage and unhappiness to them. Realizing the limitations of those sense object, they try to forget even their personality in the actions of daily run of life. They are ever ready to deny this senses of *I, me, mine* and to perform works not to enrich themselves at other's expense, but for the benefit of others. They cultivate disinterested love for humanity at large, and they sacrifice the attitude of self-love on the altar of the love for humanity or the love of God. In fact, they are the followers of the path of self-denial, self-abnegation, and self-renunciation. From the standpoint of the worldly pleasures, it appears to be dry like a road in the desert ; neither pleasant, nor attractive, nor interesting. But those who have courage and strength enough to venture to follow this apparently barren path of renunciation, reach the goal of life and enter into the eternal abode of eternal peace, happiness, and freedom. They alone realize Divinity and immortal life of Blessedness, who can renounce the temptations and attractions of the worldly pleasure that drags the ordinary mortals into the abyss of worldliness, misery, unrest, and ignorance. They are the godly men among mortals, who entirely abnegating their own rights and even sacrificing their own lives, do good to others. They are the ideals of the society as well as of nations. They are considered as the leaders of mankind. And by the strength of self-renunciation they make the whole world bow down to them.

Absolute self-abnegation is the sign of greatness and self-mastery. Whosoever can renounce the attachment to the

world and self-love in whatsoever degree he will show by his acts to that extent the strength, power and glory of the divine nature of his soul. If a man who does not believe in God and does not live a moral or virtuous life, can renounce everything for the good of others, and can sacrifice or even risk his life for some good cause. He is also honoured by his fellow men and also by men of the world.

In truth, self-abnegation is at the basis of all ethics, and is the foundation of all religions, the highest ideal of religion can be reached by that individual alone who has renounced everything; who has cut off all ties of worldliness (*samsara*) and who has denied the senses of *I, me* and *mine,* by harmonizing his individual will with the universal will. Have you not seen that an atheist, when he reads the great renunciation of Buddha, described by Sir Edwin Arnold in his *Light of Asia,* stands in awe and reverence for Buddha, and admires his greatness and spiritual strength? Think of the balance of an oriental monarch, with its splendours, luxuries, comforts, pleasures, enjoyments and amusements which formed the constant attendants of the Prince Siddhartha who was the heir to his father's throne. Think of his most beautiful wife whose character was like that of the ideal wife and whose heart and soul were devoted to him. Having renounced such a faithful wife and a child and everything, Buddha went into the forest like a beggar with a begging bowl in his hand, and followed the path which ultimately led his restless and unhappy soul to the abode of Nirvana, the cessation of sorrow, suffering, attachment, and unhappiness. By following that path, Buddha attained to perfect realization of the unchangeable Truth and everlasting peace and also emancipation from the ties of worldliness and became the Saviour of mankind. He conquered all temptations personified as Mara, by the strength of his love for humanity. Buddha did not preach God, but his whole religion was founded upon the one idea of self-abengation and absolute renunciation of self-love and attachment to the world. Buddha said: "Cut out the love of self like an autumn lotus, with thy hand, cherish the root of peace". Because, from self-love comes grief and fear, and he who is free from self-love, knows neither grief nor fear. Buddha taught: "Follow the path of virtue and do not follow that of

the world ; the virtuous rests in bliss in this world and in the next". "Look upon the world as you would on a bubble ; look upon it as you would on a mirage ; the king of death does not see him who thus looks down upon the world".

Again the same renunciation of self-love and attachment to the pleasures and comforts of the earthly life is the ideal of the worshippers of God. It was the keynote of the religion which was preached by Jesus the Christ. Jesus was a true lover of God. He himself renounced everything he had. He possessed nothing ; he had neither family nor wife and children. He renounced his parents and brothers. He wandered from place to place, helping mankind by fulfilling their spiritual needs, as Buddha and his disciples did before the time of Jesus, and as the Sannyasins have been doing in India from ancient times. Buddha was a Karma Yogi, while Jesus was a Bhakti Yogin. A Karma Yogi renounced self-love for doing good to humanity for the love of humanity, while a *bhakta* who is a lover of God, sacrifices everything for the love of God. He denies the senses of *I, me, mine,* and holds those of *thou, thee, thine* instead, and crushing his individual selfish, will say from the very bottom of his soul: "Thy will be done, and not mine". It is a fact that true *bhakta's* renunciation comes through selfless love. Again in true love, there is neither I, nor me, nor mine. Wherever there is the expression of true love, there is to be found the effacement of the self as well as the denial of the love for petty self. The soul that is enchanted by the magic power of the Divine Love, forgets its own individuality, runs after the Beloved one, and eventually becomes one with him through divine communion. This has been beautifully expressed by the Sufi poet Jalaluddin. A lover knocked at the door of the beloved and the answer came who is there? The answer came from within "It is I, and in this house there is no room for thee and me". The lover went away and spent a year in the forest in prayer, fast, etc. and returned and again knocked at the door of his friend. Now, as soon as he knocked at the door, the voice came: "Who is there?" At that time he said: "It is thou". Then at once the door was opened. So self-renunciation is the sign of true love. Even in the ordinary life of the worldly people, wherever we see the expression of genuine love, there is also the manifestation of self-abnegation. When

anyone falls in love with another, both the lover and the beloved are so attracted to each other that they sacrifice all other duties, all other ideas and all other pleasures upon that altar of love. A true lover unconsciously renounces his duties towards his parents, relatives, friends, and society for the time being. He finds no pleasure in eating and drinking and in performing the works of his daily life, when he is separated from his beloved. His whole heart and soul are absorbed in the beloved. He always looks inattentive, and whatever work he undertakes, he performs it automatically. Three-fourths of his mind goes after the beloved and with the remaining one-fourth he sustains his life for the sake of serving his beloved. Where are his duties gone? Where are his pleasures gone? Then they have all disappeared. Do they please him any more? No. Then he forgets everything. Time and space do not exist in his relation. He thinks of nothing, speaks of nothing, and dreams of nothing, other than his beloved one. No duty can bind a true lover. No threat or command of relatives or friends can distract his attention from the object of love. Then he is free, i.e. he is free from all duties and wordly cares and anxieties. Then his mind is concentrated. His soul is peaceful and happy. The renunciation or sacrifice which we find in the character of a true lover, is true renunciation. He does not renounce or sacrifice anything by making any special effort, but his tremendous feeling of all engrossing love floods every corner of his heart, leaving no room for other feelings and ideas. The flood of true love swallows up all selfish desires; and, consequently, a true lover unconciously renounces everything. Therefore this kind of reunciation through love is sweet and pleasant. But the reunciation which requires special effort, is unpleasant, dry and desirable. If the object of such true love be God himself instead of an ordinary selfish mortal and if the same extreme feeling of love be directed towards God, what will be the result? It will be Divine Love. It will make the lover free from all bondage of duty and social or family relations. The soul of the lover will commune constantly with the beloved Lord of the universe, and, eventually, will become one with Him.

The same love, when directed towards man, becomes earthly, but when directed towards God, is divine. As for

example, a river running down from a high mountain, flows rapidly with tremendous force and breaking down all barriers covers the valley with an active current of water. Suppose the river was running towards the west, where there is a great desert like Sahara, but being guided as it were by some unseen hand it suddenly changes its course and flowing towards the east falls into the ocean and becomes one with it. If it continued to run westward instead of falling into the ocean, it would have disappeared in the vast expanse of dry sand. Similiarly when the stream of love flows in the heart with great force, it breaks down all the barriers of duties, pleasures, amusements, and selfish desires which it finds in its way, but if it flows towards an object of the world, which is dry like a desert, it will gradually disappear. If, on the other hand, its course be suddenly changed towards the eternal ocean of Divine Love, then there will be a happy union which will last till eternity. This breaking down of all barriers of duties, pleasures, and desires is meant by the word 'renunciation'. It is an unfortunate word for the western minds, their tender hearts are easily frightened at the sound of renunciation. But if it is properly understood, it is not so fearful. Those who know what true love is, will understand how renunciation comes through love. It is nothing but the negative side and the positive side of the same feeling of love. Without renunciation there cannot be love, and without genuine love there cannot be true renunciation. He is not a true lover whose whole heart and soul are not centred upon the beloved. He is not a true lover whose whole energy and all actions of life are not directed towards the one object of love. The object of love must also be the one centre of attraction, where all the diverging rays of self-love must converge and upon which the scattered energy of the mind of the lover will be focussed. Then it is true love, otherwise it is a passion. When such madness of intense love manifests itself for the beloved one, do you know what become of the objects of love? Then they disappear. If we look at those minor objects, what shall we say: we shall say that the lover has forsaken or renounced all those things for his beloved. But if we look towards his beloved one, we shall say that he has extreme or intense love for that one object and his heart and soul are devoted to his one object of true love and such being the condition, we may say

true love and renunciation go hand in hand; one cannot exist without the other.

In fact, they are like the two sides, obverse and reverse of a coin. If the beloved of such a true lover be transfigured into the supreme spirit, what will be the result. He will realize God and attain to perfect peace and happiness and become one with the divine Being. He will reach perfection, the prime goal of our earthly existence. Because God alone is the most proper object of our love. Our souls can find no rest and no peace, by loving anything outside of God. He alone can satisfy the craving of true love; he alone can fulfil the desires of our hearts. By coming in touch with him alone, our souls realize the supreme felicity.

It reminds me of the life of a great Hindu sage who flourished in India some five centuries ago. His name was Vilvamangala. His parents were high caste rich Hindus, and he was their only son. Vilvamangala inherited his parental property. He was the wealthiest man in the city. The city was situated on the bank of a river. On the other side of the river, there was a small village at a little distance. In that village lived a young girl of extra-ordinary beauty and of a marvellous character. She was not like an ordinary country girl. She was very intelligent, well-educated and extremely spiritual. Her charming appearance, fair complexion and sweet voice attracted the attention of one and all. Notwithstanding all these qualities she could study human character very quickly. Vilvamangala used to go to that village and, in course of time, he fell in love with her. At last their mutual love became so strong that Vilvamangala used to go to see her every day. Once on a time there was a grand ceremony in Vilvamangala's house and several people were invited and sumptuously fed. He was so busy in receiving and entertaining his guests he could not find opportunity to get out of his house. But his mind became restless and impatient. He began to think of his beloved one, and pictured to himself in various ways what she was doing. At mid-night when he was about to retire, it suddenly came accross his mind that his beloved one was thinking intensely of him and waiting for his arrival. No sooner this idea came into his imagination, a sudden impulse arose in him and he was determined to go to see her, he jumped up, and went out stealthily through the back door. As he came

out, he found that it was pouring with heavy torrents of rain and the sky was covered with heavy cloud, for which the night was awefully dark. There was no light in the streets except occasional flashes of lightning. Slowly he walked through the streets and went along the riverside with the help of those flashes. He looked for boats to cross the river and not a single boat was in the river. He was at a loss to decide what he should do. His whole attention was so engrossed with one idea of crossing the river that he could not think of returning home. He was determined to cross the river. He thought that his beloved one must have made certain arrangements for his crossing the river. As he was thinking thus, he discovered by the help of a sudden flash of lightening a log of wood which was floating near the shore. Immediately he jumped into the river and caught hold of it with great effort. Blind as he was with love, he thought that, that log of wood was sent by his beloved. Having crossed the river, he went to the village, and knocked at the gate of the garden house. She was fast asleep. Nobody opened the door. The garden or her house was protected on all sides by high strong walls. He wanted to climb up the wall, if he could get some support. As he was searching here and there for a support, he found a rope hanging down from the top of the wall. He thought that his beloved hanged that rope across the wall for him. So Vilvamangala got hold of that rope, and jumped over the wall. This sudden noise of his fall woke up the sleeping girl. As she woke up, she heard the voice of her lover. She lighted a candle, and oppened the door. Vilvamangala was so excited that he fainted at the sight of his beloved. She was frightened to see her lover in that state. But she could not stand near him on account of the putrid odour which was emitting from his body. After a while when he recovered from his faint, she asked how he crossed the river, and jumped over the high wall in that dead of night. Then he answered: "Why, you kept a log of wood for me on the other side of the river, with the help of that log I have crossed the river, and by the help of that rope which you kept hanging down across the wall, I have jumped over the wall" ? She said: "I did not keep a log of wood in the river, neither did I hang any rope across the wall". Then she told her maid-servant to look at the rope and also the log of wood. So the maid-servant went with a

lantern to inspect, when she found it was not a rope, but the tail of big cobra. She was extremely horrified. The cobra was entering a hole near the top of the wall. It is a curious fact that when a snake has entered half way into a hole, if anybody pulls it by the tail, it will not come out easily. Then she went to the river to see the log of wood. She found it was not a log of wood, but it was a decomposed deadbody. She came back and told her mistress what she saw. When she came to know that it was not a rope, but the tail of a cobra and it was not a log of wood, but a putrefied corpse, she was stupified, and struck with amazement and horror. Then after a while she began to reprimand him severely on account of his adventure. She appreciated his extreme love for her. She thought that this kind of love is very rare in this world, but if he (Vilvamangala) could direct this intense love towards God, he would surely be a great Yogi. Thus thinking she said to him: "If you love God in this manner as you love me, you would have found God at this very moment. You have renounced everything for me. You are ready to sacrifice your life for me. But if you love me, please do one thing for my sake. A great Yogi lives near the outskirts of this village. He is my spiritual teacher. I go to him occasionally and follow his advice. Tomorrow you come with me to that Yogi and act according to his instructions". Vilvamangala heard attentively everything, and then answered: "I can do anything for your sake. I shall do whatever you will tell me to do". So next morning they went to the Yogi. The Yogi accepted him as his disciple, realizing the current of love that was flowing in his soul. He followed the teachings of the Yogi. At last following the instructions of the Yogi, Vilvamangala succeeded in realizing God through extreme love, and became a great Yogi. He obtained true happiness. Thousands came from different quarters to see him. The same love, when directed towards a worldly object, becomes mere human love which gradually disappears and ends in great sufferings, but when directed towards God, becomes divine and brings eternal peace. Eventually Vilvamangala succeeded in turning the course of the mighty stream of love that was flowing in his soul towards Krishna, the incarnation of love. His soul communed with Krishna, and, in a short time, he became the shining example of renunciation through love. As in ordinary

worldly life renunciation and love go hand in hand, so also in religious life. If anybody loves any other body unconsciously, he renounces and sacrifices those things which prevents his progress.

Now, from this instance, we come to know that more we advance towards the north pole, the more the south pole remains behind. Similarly if we march on towards our highest idea, the lower ideals will fall behind, or, in other words, we will have to give up our lower ideals unconsciously. This natural renunciation or giving up our lower ideal, when we get higher ones, is the soul of our progress. So progress is impossible without renunciation. And it is the law of nature. If evolution means a progress from lower to higher, then the reaching to a higher stage is impossible without forsaking the lower one. Or you may put it in another form that when the lower one evolves and merges into higher one, the lower stage vanishes for ever. Childhood vanishes, when youth appears. Similarly lower duties, pleasures and ideals merge with higher duty, higher happiness and higher ideal. This is the highest renunciation. All of us are bound to renounce lower objects sooner or later. Those who have got hold of the higher ideal, will reach it sooner. But those whose ideal is lower, will remain in that low stage, until higher ideal comes. Therefore, analyze your thoughts, and see what is the highest ideal of your life. If it be worldly pleasure, go and enjoy, and if it be higher, try your best to find it in this life. Ignorant and deluded people think that worldly pleasure is the highest ideal of life and, consequently, they become frightened, when they hear of renunciation. If you want eternal bliss, march on towards the highest ideal, and renunciation will come by itself. Sri Krishna said to Arjuna: "Giving up all lower ideals, fix thy mind in me which is the highest goal, and concentrate all thoughts in me. Then thou shalt live undoubtedly in me both here and hereafter".

CHAPTER III

MANIFESTATION OF DIVINE LOVE*

In the most ancient scriptures of the world, in the Vedas, we find an expression of the conception of God which no human mind has yet been able to transcend. The ancient vedic sages and seers of truth, after giving various attributes to God, such as omniscient, omnipotent, just, merciful, etc., found that all these attributes are more or less one-sided and imperfect; and none of these expressed the true nature of Divinity perfectly. They wanted an expression which would bring the individual soul nearer to God, which would show his relation to the individual soul more perfectly, and which would fulfil the highest aspirations of human hearts. After struggling for a long time they succeeded in their attempts and found such an expression. We read it in the *Upanishads*: "The true nature of Divinity is love as well as unchangeable Infinite and Eternal." "Blessed is he who has tasted that love divine; who can live for a moment if that Divine Love ceases to manifest itself in this universe? God is love and love is God".

There is no expression which affects or touches our hearts so strongly and so deeply as the word love. It needs no definition or explanation. It is the one power that governs our lives; and it is inseparable from our existence. We do not ask what love is, and, instinctively, we know its nature from the very moment we become conscious of our existence, we begin to love ourselves, consciously or unconsciously. This love is manifested in lower animals as well as in human beings. Wherever there is the expression of self, there is also the manifestation of that love of self, but lower animals cannot know the love of self objectively, they know it subjectively and they love themselves instinctively and unconsciously. Man is the only animal who is capable of knowing himself objectively as well as subjectively.

In the lowest form of animal life, we find this love of self is very narrow and it is confined to the body, but if we rise a

* This lecture (or chapter) is an enlarged and modified one of the first chapter.

little higher in the scale of evolution, we find that in some species of mammalia this love of self is not confined to the body but it goes beyond that love, and cares for the offspring, and here we find the first expression of motherly feeling. Thus, we see love gradually manifests itself and developes, and in the human form it is wonderful in the range and strength of its power.

The love of self may be called animal love, or love of body. In that love, body becomes the centre of love, and that animal love includes love for all those things that are connected and most intimately related to the material body, and for all objects that bring a pleasing sensation to the petty self. This love of petty self leads us to take special care of the body, because the centre of love is the body, and self is inseparable from the body. We cannot separate ourselves from the gross material forms and it is for this reason that the vast majority of mankind love their bodies and take special care of them, being attached to these bodies, and they manifest this love of self by decorating the bodies in different ways and from the tattooing of the body by the savages to the decking with jewels and fashionable garments by the Parsian lady. Such worship of the material body is manifested in various ways. Animal love leads one to seek material pleasure, and it is very limited in its nature, but it proceeds from the true nature of Divine Love and, consequently, it brings bondage, sorrow, and suffering in the end.

If those persons who are living on this plane of selfishness and are strongly attached to their bodies, try to understand the beauty of the expression, 'God is love', they will be able to understand that pure and unselfish love which is Divine, and they will cease to project their ideas of narrow selfish love. These persons make their God a huge personification of that selfish love. They make their God unkind to some and angry with others, just as an ordinary selfish man loves some and is angry with others. But when a man rises above this plane of animal self and his love becomes less selfish, then it becomes the expression of human love, and this gradually manifests itself on the human plane. Then he rises higher and higher toward unselfishness, and begins to understand what Divine Love is and then he begins to compare the earthly love with that which is unselfish and recognises the difference between selfish-

ness and unselfishness, between attachment to the body and pure, unselfish love.

Although every individual has more or less a feeling of love, very few understand the true nature of Divine Love. You may ask yourself: "What is the nature of Divine Love?" You may think that it must be something different and something celestial and what no one can know on this earth. But this is not so. As here is only one love in the universe and it is governed by selfishness, it becomes earthly, but when it is not governed by selfish motives, it is pure and divine. All evil and wickedness are nothing but the expressions of love misdirected, and all goodness and virtue are nothing but the expressions and results of the acts, governed by unselfish motives. All sins and vices which we find in society, are nothing but the results of ill-directed love and when that love is directed toward right objects, it always produces good.

The same thing which forces one to save the life of another, when misdirected, becomes the cause of murder, theft and all the vices. The man who sacrifices his life for another, has the same love as the man who kills another in order to save himself. In the case of the former, the direction of love is right and pure, but in the case of the murder, the direction is wrong and, therefore, the result is different. In each individual soul, is flowing constantly a stream of love which remains confined within the walls of the lower self for some time. When a river is confined within the walls of the mountains, it seeks an outlet to flow into the ocean. It is the ocean of love which is called God. For ages it may be confined within the walls of limited animal self, but the tendency of that stream is to flow and run toward the ocean and it will never be lost, and that tendency will force it to make an outlet sooner or later, either by breaking down the walls, or by overflowing the barriers which stood in its way. Every drop of that stream of love which is flowing in the human heart, contains the germ of Divine Love. As a drop of water is everywhere the same, whether it is pure or impure, its chemical properties are the same. A drop of water taken from the river, would contain the same properties as that from the ocean, so a drop of love, taken from the human heart, contains all the properties of a drop of love from the ocean of Divinity, because love is one, and it varies only

in its character, according to the direction from which the stream flows. If it flows toward one's own self it is animal, and it is human, but if it flows toward the object without having any consideration for itself, then it is Divine.

The nature of love is to attract. Wherever there is the expression of true love, there is an attraction between soul and soul. The same force of attraction which causes one molecule to draw toward another, when manifested on the plane, is called love, and nothing can attract the soul but soul itself. It is the law of nature that like attracts like. When a soul is attracted toward another, then there is love. We may think that the material has the power to attract the soul, but this is a mistake, and we think this, because we do not know the nature of love. A mother loves her child, and thinks his face most beautiful, however ugly it may be. The mother does not see the ugliness, but she only sees that it is most beautiful, and when she kisses it, she thinks it lovely. But do you think that when the mother loves the face of the child, she loves the material particles that make up the form of that face? Is she attracted by these? No, it is the soul of the child lying behind the physical form which attracts the soul of the mother and, therefore, it is said in the *Upanishad*. "A mother does not love her child for the child's sake and for the sake of the material form, but for the sake of the soul, the *Atman*, the Lord that dwells beind that form". In the same way, it may be shown that the love of the wife for the husband is not for the material form of the husband, but for the soul. The *Upanishad* says: "Wife loves her husband, not for the sake of the material form, but for the sake of the *Atman*, the Lord that dwells within that form". When such pure attraction between soul and soul is manifested, there is the expression of true love and wherever there is true love, there should be the attraction between soul and soul on the soul plane, and not on the material plane. Love cannot manifest itself on the material plane, as it is always on the plane of souls. The same love which manifests itself on the soul plane may be abused by mistake. We may call it love, but it is not love, when it is on the material plane. The true attraction of love brings two souls together and makes them into one. That which unites two souls together and makes them into one, without any desire for the gratification

of selfish motives, is godliness.

It has already been said before that Divine Love seeks no return, but human love seeks return of love, and wherever there is the desire for return of love, it is not true love. It is like a shop-keeper's love for his customer, and it is like a paid servant's love for his master. Do you see there the expression of love? No, it cannot be the true kind of love, because it is bound by motive. As for example, if the paid servant does not serve his master, he will be punished or dismissed, and he serves because of the salary, so when a man serves God for getting something in return, that is not true love. When a priest serves in a temple with the expectation of getting something in return, a salary, does he serve for love? No. When a preacher preaches for return, he does not preach for love, because the moment he wants return, his preaching will be stopped also, and so there is a great deal of difference between a professional preacher or a paid priest and a true lover of God. A true lover of God does not seek anything in return. He gives what he has to give as a free offering. He does not think of himself. He does not sell his services for money or name, or any other object. He does not wish to gain wealth or fame or anything in return. He does not even sell his services for gaining his livelihood. He knows that the world will take care of him. Such Divine Love was expressed in the whole life of Krishna, Buddha and Christ and all those who are worshipped today as the incarnations of God. They are the spiritual leaders of mankind who lived in different countries in different times. They do not think of tomorrow. They had no place they could claim as their own. They had no property, and they did their work without thinking of gaining anything in return for their services.

Thinkers of modern times say that if this be practised by all, society will go to pieces. Of course, society which is based on selfishness, will go to pieces and the sooner it goes the better it will be for mankind. Such persons do not understand what Divine Love is. Their eyes are covered with the veil of selfishness, and their hearts are filled with shop-keeper's love which seeks a return at every step. Therefore they do not understand the meaning of the sayings of Jesus: "Do not think of tomorrow". They deny the existence of such persons who love in that way as Jesus the Christ did.

A true lover of God loves him, and serves him, not for any object, but because he alone is worthy, he alone is lovable, and he cannot help but loving him. Among the ordinary preachers and religious teachers, how many explain this love which seeks no return, and how many lead the life of unselfishness which brings freedom of the soul? But a true lover of God does not care for anything else in this world. Just as when we gaze upon a sunset and are struck with wonder and amasement at the beautiful colouring and say: "How sublime! how magnificient!" and again we say; "I love it". That love is a spontaneous feeling. It does not seek anything in return. In that state, mind is peaceful and restful, it may be compared to a state of bliss.

Now, if that unselfish love be directed toward the infinite source of beauty, then the lover of God says within himself: "O Lord, thou art the most beautiful, thou art my love, I love thy beauty, thou art my all in all, I cannot live without thee". Is there the slightest tinge of selfishness in such a love? Is there anything higher? Is there any endeavour for getting any return in such a love? No, because Divine Love is the fulfilment of all desires; wherever this appears all other desires cease to exist. Wherever the light of Divine Love shines, the darkness of selfishness vanishes forever; and when this Divine Love comes, the knot of attachment is torn assunder and freedom manifests itself.

"O man, if thou desirest to taste that nectar of divine love, first wipe out the least stain of selfishness that is in your soul and thou shalt taste that nectar. This taste cannot be expressed in words, he alone knows the taste who has tasted it. Who can express in words the taste of sugar? If one tries to express it to another who has never tasted it, he simply asks him to try it, that is all that he can say". Divine Love knows no fear. Do you think that there is any love in the service of a slave who serves his master for fear of punishment? No. Do you think there is any love in the heart of a devotee who serves God for fear of eternal punishment? No. It cannot be, because fear and love do not dwell in the same place. True love comes in freedom. Fear and love are like the two opposite poles, where one exists, the other is far from it. So when we are taught to fear and to love God at the same time, it will be incorrect.

It does not mean anything; it is either fear or love, as the two do not come at the same time. In ordinary life, when a girl falls in love with the lover, she loses all fear. So, when a lover of God begins to love God, he does not fear anything. He does not see suffering, sorrow, or misery in the world. He does not seek disease or death, and his soul is above all relative conditions. Divine Love opens his spiritual eyes, and he sees God dwelling in everything and all living creatures are his children, when he sees God in everything, he cannot but love everything. He knows that nothing in the universe can happen without being guided by Divine will, and to this Divine will he surrenders his own individual will.

He welcomes most heartily everything that comes in his way, whether good or bad. If a disease or misfortune comes, he says: "My beloved has sent his guest to me, I must take care of him and serve him with all my powers". When death comes, he welcomes him as his most beloved brother. Absolute self-surrender takes away all fear of death from him. In that state the individual can say from the very bottom of his heart: "Thy will be done", and it is then and then only one can say it. Ordinary people repeat these words like a parrot, without having any feeling of self-surrender or self-resignation.

When a mother loves her newly born babe and fondles it and takes care of it, she forgets all other pleasures and enjoyments of life. Unconsciously she renounces every other thought and idea that may distract her attention. Her all-absorbing motherly love swallows up all desires for selfish pleasure. So, with the devotee, unconsciously he renounces all other pleasure, and cares nothing for these, because his mind is not on the sense plane, and he is far above the pleasures of the senses, he is on the plane of the supreme Spirit. Divine Love is constantly attended by the attachment to the things that are eternal. It brings freedom to the soul and emancipation from all bondages of attachment to sense objects and sense pleasures. It is better than good works, greater than knowledge and higher than concentration and meditation, because all these end in Divine Love, but Divine Love is its own end.

The path of love is the easiest path for the attainment of Godconsciousness. He who can go through the path of love and can understand what true love is, is greater than a Yogi who

goes through the paths of concentration and meditation, and is greater than a philosopher or a philanthropist. Divine Love straightens all crookedness of the heart and brings freedom; it destroys the germs of vanity and self-conceit which are deeply rooted in human hearts. When the soul is over-powered with Divine Love, it makes the person gentle. If any one strikes him on the right cheek, he turns the left; his sayings and doings become the scriptures of the world, because Divine Love is not confined to any writing or book or scripture.

Divine Love brings that ecstatic state of superconsciousness, where the individual soul becomes one with the Divine. In that ecastatic state of consciousness, the true lover of God becomes intoxicated with Divine Love, he drinks deep, he cannot stand on his feet, he takes a step and falls and ordinary human beings say that he is mad, because they do not understand. I saw a man* in India who attained to that state, and when he reached to that state of ecstacy he was as intoxicated as though he had been drinking whisky. Sometimes he would talk in a foreign tongue, unknown to human beings, and they said he was mad. One of his disciples came to him and said: "Sir, people think that you are gone mad, or you are in the habit of drinking". He answered: "What people say is true, I am in the habit of drinking the wine of love, I do not drink any earthly drink, but I drink of love, and that is much better and intoxicating than any drinks of the world; and when they say I am mad, it is true; in the mad-house of the world, who is not mad? Some are mad for wives, some for husbands, and others for name or fame or position; show me one in this world who is not mad for anything at all. I am not mad for anything in this world, but for God who is eternal and everlasting".

Those who are intoxicated with that wine, do not fear other people, They know that other people are not on the highest plane. They do not understand that Divine Love brings spiritual strength which knows no bound. So the true lover stands on one side and the whole world on the other side, and he does not care. Whoever has tasted a drop of that soul-stirring Divine Love, has gained infinite strength and

* Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

unbounded power, by which he can face the whole world and conquer it in the twinkling of an eye. If his body is crucified, he does not care, and he knows that he is above body, he does not feel it. He cannot die, because he knows that life is indestructible and love is its nature. He then remembers the Divine sayings of the *Bhagavad Gita* that the soul cannot be burned by fire, cannot be pierced by swords, cannot be moistened by water, cannot be dried by air, and it laughs at death.

Do you think that the spirits of those who lived in the past and attained to that state of divine ecstatic love, are dead? No, the spirit or *Atman* lives forever and ever, and is as immortal as the Lord himself. In the state of superconsciousness, the whole universe appears as one ocean of Divine Love. The lover, the beloved, and love themselves are merged into oneness; one cannot sever himself from others. He realizes that he is like a wave of that ocean of love. There are many waves, but all are inseparable from the ocean. Then he comes down to the plane of ordinary human consciousness, but his expression is changed, and his face is radiant with divine glory and celestial peace. He mixes with others and talks with them, but he does not care for the things of this world or any other, and he does not wish for salvation or heaven or any other place. Happiness or unhappiness comes to us as long as we are on that plane, but a free soul never seeks freedom, he realizes that he is free, he feels for others and suffers for them, and tries to bring all humanity into that state of superconsciousness, so that everyone will be able to enjoy the bliss which he enjoys.

I will show you the path which will lead you to the ocean of love, that will make you happy, by which you will attain to the supreme state of Godconsciousness. But people do not listen to that call, because they are busy with other things. Very few come after hearing that call, and very few of those who come, follow his advice and attain to the highest state. Therefore it is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (7·6):

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद् यतति सिद्धये।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः॥

Amongst thousands who will come, perhaps one will be ready to hear the call, and amongst thousands who come after hearing that call, few will attain to the state of bliss. But the lover of God who tries to help others, does not get discouraged, he realizes the conditions of other people. He says: "Let those hear who have ears, let those see who have eyes". Such is the character of the lover of God. As long as he lives, he does work constantly without seeking a return. He works through love, and his work is a free offering to the world. He has the power of opening the spiritual eyes of others, and those who follow his directions, attain to the state of Godconsciousness. Divine Love is the greatest thing in the world ; it is the soul of our souls, it is God and ought to be the highest ideal of everyone of us.